LIFESTYLE / C1
The AOL experience: Living is easy when breathing is fun

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US war vets' children seek recognition

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'Nicole,' Smith cite similar provisions in custody issue

METRO / A17
8-year-old, 4 others injured in pillbox explosion in Pasig market

Humans can track scent like dogs, but not as well

RESEARCHERS AT THE University of California, Berkeley, have found that people can follow a scent surprisingly well, as long as they do not need disembarking at dignity, putting their

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, December 19, 2006 44 Vol. 22 / No. 11 website: inquirer.net

Cold wind keeps 'Tomas' from moving into RP

By Norman Bordadora

TROPICAL STORM "TOMAS" HAS ENTERED THE Philippine area of responsibility but is not expected to make landfall on any part of the archipelago.

Nathaniel Cruz, chief of Pagasa's weather branch, said a high pressure area over the Philippines was keeping Tomas (international code name: Trami) from running into the islands.

CHILD WORKS 44

Water rates up starting Jan. 1

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Filipino migrant workers receive gifts as they arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to spend the Christmas holidays with their loved ones. Remittances from Filipinos working abroad hit a record monthly high of $1.19 billion in October. EDITOR'S

Inflation, big debts cited for increases

By Christine A. Gaylican

STARTING JAN. 1, CUSTOMERS of Maynilad Water Services and Manila Water Co. Inc. in Metro Manila and nearby areas will be paying more for the tap water they use.

It was not the only bad news for residents of Metro Manila and nearby provinces. Manila Electric Co. announced power outages would hit some of its franchise areas in the coming days. (See related story on Page A11.)

The representative Maynilad will be charging its customers in the west zone an additional 48 centavos per cubic meter, raising the cost of water to an average of P32.99 per cubic meter from P32.51. Maynilad has 6.2 million customers.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Regulatory Office approved the increase in a resolution issued yesterday.

With the increase, consumers in general using an average of 30 cubic meters a month will have to pay P987.70, or P12.40 more than the current P975.30.

WATER RATES: A4

Fresh Cha-cha push seen after Christmas

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Jocelyn R. Uy

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY strongly indicated it was just biding its time, in deference to the Christmas season, before making another push for Charter change.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's advisers, as well as Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., served notice as some 5,000 protesters staged a surprise rally in the Makati financial district to reserve their demand for her ouster.

Apparently disheartened by the small impact created by Sunday's prayer rally at the Luneta, where Roman Catholic Church organizers had banned political speeches and slogan-chanting, yesterday's protesters unfurled banners and chanted denunciations of Mrs Arroyo.

The rally appeared to have caught the police unawares.

Interviewed on dzRH radio, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President had not discussed any of the three modes for Charter change allowed under the Constitution.

"We cannot say we are backing off (from) major political reforms, such as Charter change. In

FRESH CHA-CHA: A4

Suspected guns-for-hire held in Abra congressman's killing

By DJ Yap

POLICE HAVE DETAINED SUSpected guns-for-hire and offered a P200,000 reward for information in connection with the murders of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr and his security aide, officials said yesterday.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero yesterday said the killing of Bersamin was a "slap on the face" of Congress and could set the stage for more violence in the run-up to the May 2007 elections.

Escudero called on Speaker Jose de Venecia to take immediate steps to secure congressmen.

Also yesterday, Abra Gov. Vicente Valera dismissed speculations that he was behind the attack on Bersamin. "Bersamin had always been our ally," Valera told ANC television. "It's just too bad that some people were trying to

SUSPECTS: A4

Bunye says character change meant for all

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo apparently did not feel specifically alluded to when Catholic Church leaders called for Filipinos to focus more on character change than on Charter change last Sunday.

"I think it applies to everybody, including reporters, politicians and local government officials," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a press briefing yesterday. "We agree that moral values should be emphasized, especially in our society, which has become very materialistic."

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales and Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, stressed the need for character change among Filipinos when they spoke at Sunday's Church-led prayer rally at the Luneta.

Not known for mincing her words, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said the call amounted to a confession by Catholic leaders that, despite having been rooted in the country for hundreds of years, the Church had

BUNYE SAYS: A4

AFP readies 3-year plan to finish off Reds

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE MILITARY IS DRAFTING A new internal security strategy for the next three years in line with President Macapagal-Arroyo's order to finish off the communist insurgency by the end of her term in 2010.

The new battle plan succeeds the military's five-year Oplan Bantay Laya that will end at the close of the year.

Aside from tackling the four-decade-old insurgency waged by the Communist Party of the Philippines through its armed wing, the New People's Army, Oplan Bantay Laya is aimed at fighting Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah extremists.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said the new plan, tentatively called Oplan Bantay Laya II, would focus on "active guerrilla fronts" while taking a "holistic approach" in the counterinsurgency campaign.

"It will have more components of the developmental (approach), but this one is focused on the active guerrilla fronts," he said.

In the latest incident, NPA guerrillas ambushed a group of police and civilians who were conducting combat operations aboard a small boat in Placer, Masbate, at 3 p.m. on Sunday, killing four officers and wounding two civilians, Senior Supt. Eugenio Alcantalas, the provincial police director, said.

The fatalities were identified as PO2 Jose Blaire Barsaga and Police Officers 1 Joars Gonzales and Jeffrey Ramos.

AFP READIES: A4

CHESTNUT Tower in Chicago, where former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante's family lives. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Lawyer doubts Bolante still in US jail

By Norman Bordadora

A FORMER AGRICULTURE UNdersecretary accused of diverting P728 million in fertilizer funds to administration allies to ensure President Macapagal-Arroyo's election victory in 2004 may no longer be in the United States, according to a law professor who opposed his application for political asylum.

Harry Roque said he received information that Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante had been pushing for voluntary deportation to Indonesia or any other member-state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

"This is the reason why his lawyer is intent on secrecy regarding his case," Roque, a member of the University of the Philippines' Institute of International Legal Studies, told the Inquirer.

Bolante's lawyer threatened to file contempt charges against any media entity that would come out with details of the former government official's asylum hearing.

"So we speak, I don't know where he is or whether he is still in the US jail," Roque said.

Bolante was arrested at the Los Angeles International Airport on

LAWYER DOUBTS: A4

BOLANTE'S daughter and wife arrive at Chestnut Tower from a court hearing in this photo taken on Dec. 14. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICAGO TRIBUNE

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2006

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: "Weather conditions all across will have cloudy skies and rains. Cooler temperatures and moderate winds blowing from the southeast, southwest, and northeast areas. The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy skies with light rains."

SOURCE: PAGASA

Palace cuts ties with 'The Firm'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

"THE FIRM" HAS LOST ITS MOST IMPORTANT client.

A Malacañang source said that President Macapagal-Arroyo had decided to consult the Palace's designated chief legal counsel, Sergio Apostol, for all her legal concerns, both public and private.

The source, who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to make the disclosure, said the President had cut off all her ties with the Villaroza & Angangco—widely called "The Firm" for its influence and color sources, after Malacañang had a falling out with the office's founding partners on the Charter change issue.

The source said the President had opted not to hire another private law firm to replace Villaroza & Angangco, which had regularly provided legal advice and services to the President and her family even before she stepped into Malacañang.

Representatives of Villaroza & Angangco, which holds office at a Makati City building named in Don Jesus Boulevard, did not respond to the Inquirer's calls.

The President was apparently slighted by the stinging rebuke of the people's initiative to change the Constitution by the Supreme Court pinned by Associate Justice Antonio Carpio last October when the plan was exposed as a "gigantic fraud on the people."

Prince Carpio—who had widely espoused Carpio, a founder of Villaroza & Angangco and an appointee of the President to the high court, to vote for and not trash the President's pet crusade.

CUSTODY CASE

'Nicole,' Smith cite similar provisions

By Armand N. Nocum

BAIL VICTIM "NICOLE'S" LAWYERS—THIS time aided by former Senators Jovito Salonga and Wigberto Tañada—want the petition filed by convicted US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith seeking his return to US Embassy custody transferred from the Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court.

SALONGA

In a six-page motion filed before the Court of Appeals, Nicole's lawyers said the Supreme Court had exclusive jurisdiction over the issues raised by Smith's habeas petition.

"The petition for certiorari of [Smith] filed with the (CA) involves pure questions of law regarding the interpretation of provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement which falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Supreme Court en banc," Nicole's lead counsel Evalyn Ermac said.

Salonga, Tañada

Former Senate President Salonga and Tañada signed as co-petitioners and helped in the "preparation and filing" of the petition asking the CA to "assist people" [an anti-crime initiative] commit the case to the Supreme Court.

In his petition, Smith had asked the CA to nullify the Dec. 12, 2006, order issued by Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon jr. ordering the convicted Marine's motion to be transferred from the Makati city jail to the US Embassy.

Salonga and Tañada, who were among the 12 senators who had voted for the removal of US military bases in the country in 1991, will appear for Nicole in case the CA decides to transmit Smith's petition to the SC.

Same argument

In her motion, Nicole (through her lawyers, also asserted that the case should be transferred to the Supreme Court considering that a similar petition filed by her counsel was still pending before the court.

She was referring to the petition for certiorari filed on June 19, 2006, questioning the constitutionality and interpretation of Article V, Paragraph 6, of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

The same provision is being used by Smith as grounds for seeking transfer of his custody.

The provision states that: "The custody of any United States personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with US military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings."

"The said petition before the Supreme Court involves the issues that herein petitioner Daniel Smith has raised in his instant petition before the Court of Appeals, particularly the interpretation of Article V, Paragraph 6, of the Visiting Forces Agreement insofar as the issue of custody is concerned," Nicole's lawyers said.

Unconstitutional

In their petition for certiorari, Nicole's lawyers asked the Supreme Court to declare the VFA provision unconstitutional as it violated her right to equal protection under the law being the victim in the case.

Smith maintained that under the same provision, he should have remained in the custody of the US government until the completion of all the judicial proceedings relating to the rape case filed against him.

Smith accused Pozon of committing a grave abuse of discretion and acting without jurisdiction when the judge ordered the Marine's confinement at the Makati city jail.

Mutual agreement

The issue of custody over United States personnel facing criminal charges in the Philippines, according to the petitioner, was to be mutually agreed upon by the executive branches of the US and the Philippines under the VFA.

"Given the foregoing, necessity urgently admits that the instant petition of Daniel Smith should be referred by the Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court in deference to the primary jurisdiction of the Supreme Court over the petition pending before the latter court which involves the same parties and the same and/or similar issues," Nicole's lawyers said.

Jaworski car bomb set off by remote control, say cops

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE USED TO bomb the minivan of Pasig City Rep. Roberto "Doday" Jaworski appeared to have been triggered by remote control.

The bomb also contained strengthening, a highly explosive substance commonly used in dynamite.

Task Force Aeroni head Supt. Federico Terre and initial forensic investigation by the Bomb Data Center showed that what was used to bomb the car was a remote-control activated improvised explosive device."

Terre said the Philippine National Police Crime Laboratory, which studied the debris from the bombed vehicle, confirmed the bomb had contained strengthening.

Police had earlier suspected the bomb was made of explosives or IED powder.

Terre said both substances were highly explosive, while "strengthening" was commonly used in dynamite and IED powder was used in C4 plastic explosives."

Jaworski, his youngest brother Hans and a bodyguard were riding in a silver Toyota Innova on Tuesday last week along C-5 road in Pasig City when they heard a mild bang and smoke began filling the minivan.

Jaworski, after they jumped out of the vehicle, a blow-up in the middle of the north-bound lane of C-5 Road.

Jaworski said he had also asked police officials to probe Pasig City Police chief Senior Supt. Fernando Oyanid for his statements immediately after the bombing incident.

Oyanid had supposedly told some reporters after the blast that family electrical wiring might have caused the explosion.

"I have asked the higher officers in the PNP to look into the statement of Oyanid," Jaworski told the reporters.

"I almost died and he said there was nothing to worry about. I looked like a fool," Jaworski said in Pilipino.

The lawmaker tried to call Oyanid several times and texted him but he did not reply. He was also supposedly not available when the reporters went to his office.

But Eastern Police District director Chief Supt. Leon Terrae said the

because that Oyanid had explained to him that what he had initially said about the bombing was only his "initial impression."

"I already reprimanded him verbally. I told him not to give premature statements," Terrae said.

Sandigan orders transfer of P29-B Marcos loot to gov't

By Norman Bordadora

THE SANDIGANBAYAN YESTERday ordered the transfer of P29 billion worth of Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) shares to the government, almost a year after a Supreme Court ruling that stripped the shares as "ill-gotten" riches by former President Ferdinand Marcos or the late Imelda Cojuangco.

The order ends 20 years of requisitory litigation among key players in the government, the Cojuangco family, tycoon Alfonso Yuchengco and the Marcos family—for control of what once was the biggest investment block in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's largest telecommunications company.

The anti-graft court's Fourth Division ordered the PTIC's corporate secretary to cancel stock certificates representing 111,415 shares owned in the name of Prime Holdings Inc. (PHI) and to issue new ones in the name of the Philippine government.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government has said the assets of the PTIC shares can easily reach the government between P25 billion to P26 billion.

"If told, there is/are no appeal to the petitioners for the immediate enforcement of the SC decision dated Jan. 20, 2006," said the Sandiganbayan. The SC decision overruled a 2002 Sandiganbayan decision dismissing the government's claim.

The graft court reminded objections to the transfer filed by sister-in-law Alberta Yuchengco and T. Bailey Corporation and defendants Hal, Estate of spouses Mariano and Imelda Cojuangco, who cited a pending appellate motion before the Supreme Court seeking permission to file a third motion for reconsideration.

Sandiganbayan chief sheriff Edgardo Urieta said that his office has ten days to complete the transfer upon receipt of the 50th of December from the Fourth Division clerk of court.

"This will be quick," Urieta said.

Meralco announces power outages in Metro

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER USERS IN SOME PARTS OF the Manila Electric Company franchise area will have to experience power outages lasting between six and 12 hours in the coming days.

The distribution utility company said they will be undertaking emergency line repairs to ensure uninterrupted power during the holidays.

Meralco vice president for corporate communications Ilyn Cruz said the maintenance work will be completed before Christmas. "These projects will ensure that our customers will continue to enjoy the supply of electricity this Christmas and for the rest of the holiday season," he added.

He said projects to be completed include those that were declared to give way to the immediate rehabilitation of the electric facilities that were severely damaged by Typhoon "Milenyo" and other devastating weather disturbances.

Today, areas that will experience power interruptions include Tondo in Manila; Hagat in Malabon; Las Piñas in Laguna; Sampaloc, Santa Mesa and Sta Cruz in Pasig; Old Balara in Quezon City; Pasig and Cainta.

On Wednesday, affected areas will be San Miguel, Manila, Calumpit and San Ildefonso in Bulacan are scheduled to undergo maintenance works on Wednesday, while portions of Quezon City, San Miguel in Bulacan, and Cainta.

On Friday, there will be brownouts in Marikina and San Juan in Quezon, to be followed by portions of Manila, Navotas and Mandaluyong on Saturday.

Strong peso alarms Customs; P196-B target collection based on P56-to-$1 exchange rate

By Lala B. Salamovia

THE STRENGTHENING OF THE PESO IS not always a source of cheer for everyone.

For the Bureau of Customs, the second largest revenue-generating agency in the country, it causes apprehension because this could lower the agency's collection.

Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales yesterday said that when the BOC's P196-billion target collection for 2006 was set, it was premised on an exchange rate of P56 to $1.

The Philippine currency's performance has since improved. The peso has been hitting record highs, sometimes selling for as low as even P49 to the dollar.

In collecting taxes and duties, the BOC bases its assessments on the dollar-denominated acquisition value of imported articles.

"The rising peso will really affect our collection. It could go down because of the exchange rate," Morales said, adding that the lesser volume of imports and the falling oil prices had caused setbacks for the bureau for the bureau as well.

The improvement in the peso's performance has been attributed to the increased cash remittances sent by overseas Filipino workers to their relatives here and to the weakening of the US dollar, among other factors.

Morales pointed out, however, that despite the peso's improved performance, the BOC's collection target had not been revised.

The customs chief said though that he will expected to meet the bureau's collection goal for this year because of "measures," in the form of supplies collections by the BOC in the earlier months of the year.

"We have been measures because of our surplus, and we are confident we will meet the target," he said.

By the end of October, the customs bureau had over P6 billion in surplus collections, although the extra revenue could go down because of the BOC's November performance.

The November collection is supposed to be announced today by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, but sources in the BOC said revenues last month fell short by over P1 billion.

Morales yesterday also said that he was concerned about reviving the BOC's collection target for the year, otherwise any surplus revenues might not be known.

He said the surplus was to be used to reward the bureau's personnel responsible for collecting the taxes, based on the latest salary law. "We just want to give our personnel what is due them," he said.

Japan PM to visit Europe, attend Asean summit in RP

TOKYO—JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER Shinzo Abe will visit Europe early next month before traveling to the Philippines to attend an Asean summit, a government spokesman said Monday.

Abe's European tour from Jan. 9 to Jan. 13 will take in Britain, France, Germany and Belgium, spokesman Masakazu Nakai said.

Abe will then visit the Philippines from Jan. 14 to Jan. 15 for the East Asia Summit of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The summit was initially scheduled for Dec. 12-13 but was abruptly postponed when a typhoon threatened to hit Cebu where it was to be held.

Abe, who took office in September, made his first overseas trip as prime minister to Beijing and Seoul in early October. He visited Vietnam for a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in November. He also met with President Macapagal-Arroyo in the Philippines on the sidelines of the summit.

His trip to Europe precedes a visit to the US, in a break with tradition for new Japanese prime ministers, who usually visit Japan's biggest ally soon after taking office. AP

CEASEFIRE VIOLATION

Gov't forces, Moro rebels swap charges

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COUNTRY'S largest Muslim rebel group yesterday accused each other of breaking a nearly three-and-a-half year old ceasefire after 10 militants were killed in a gun battle last week in the South.

Lieutenant Colonel Julieto Anda, an army spokesman, said 300 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ambushed a military convoy in Rajah Buayan town on Friday, triggering an exchange of fire lasting half an hour.

"We have filed a protest for the rebels' violation of our ceasefire agreement," Anda told reporters.

"We continue to support the peace talks and taking an active defense. But, if they will attack us, we have no other choice but to defend ourselves."

The rebels said there was no ambush and countered that the army attacked them with mortar bombs without any provocation.

"We have filed our own protest to the ceasefire committee," said Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesman, adding the incident would not jeopardize peace talks, brokered by Malaysia since 2001, to end an insurgency that has killed 120,000 people since the late 1960s.

The truce has largely held but the two sides have often traded allegations of sporadic violation including in July.

Peace talks have been stalled since they were the size and wealth of a proposed autonomy homeland for three million Muslims in the South of the mainly Roman Catholic country.

On Dec. 6, the rebels' chief peace negotiator told Reuters the MILF was not ready to return to talks with the government unless Manila offered them more territory.

The MILF wants to add more than 1,000 villages to an existing five-province Muslim autonomous region to the resource-rich southwestern Mindanao. The government has said it must put the demand to a popular vote. REUTERS

SONGS OF THE SEASON

The UP Singing Ambassadors (UPSA) has launched its first two Christmas CDs "Songs of the Season I & II" with a series of mall tours. Catch them in concert today at the Philamlife Auditorium at 7 p.m. and tomorrow at The Podium at 6 p.m. Proceeds of the sales will enable UPSA to continue representing the country in future European competitions and festivals and support its outreach programs with homes for the aged, hospitals and street children as beneficiaries. UPSA is the 2002 ALPAP awardee for Best University Choir, the Philippine entry to the Llorens International Music Prize and winner of the prestigious 2001 Guido d'Arezzo competitions. Some of the songs in the CDs are Paalam na Kuya Ko, Kumukutikutitap, Handel's Hallelujah from the Messiah and a Michel Legrand medley.

Transport body to monitor rollback of jeepney fares

By Rica T. Olchondra

THE LAND TRANSPORTATION FRANCHISING and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has ordered a monitoring team in check if all transport groups concerned were implementing the jeepney fare rollback ordered in the National Capital Region and Central and southern Luzon this month.

LTFRB chair Thompson Lantion has urged the riding public to call the Department of Transportation and Communication Action Center Hotline 7580 for any complaints of jeepney drivers and charging the outlawed fares.

The LTFRB has been receiving complaints of bus overcharging since it imposed a provisional fare cut Dec. 11.

The temporary rollback covers public utility jeepneys that have been directed to reduce the basic fare for the first four kilometers from P7.50 to P7. Additional kilometers will still cost 75 centavos each.

Passengers who qualify for discounts—like senior citizens, persons with disabilities and students—are entitled to a 20-percent fare discount for the first four kilometers.

When the fare is less than P7.50, they pay P6 for the first four kilometers; now that the fare is P7, they should only be charged P5.60 for the first four kms.

For students, however, the 20-percent discount applies only on days when there is school, mainly from Monday to Friday. On weekends and holidays when there are no regular classes, the discounted fares do not apply.

Correction

IN THE DEC. 18 ISSUE, a story on Page A2—"Palace defends Asean postponement"—misstated that the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit has been rescheduled to Jan. 11-13. The summit has been rescheduled to Jan. 13-15.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors or writing to the Ang Dak, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th floor, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mayapis Street, Makati City, fax 896-6740/896-6000, e-mail <editor@inquirer.com.ph>.

FORMAL REPLIES KNOWN TODAY

More countries confirm attendance to Asean summit

By Nob Cunneran

SOUTH KOREA HAS CONfirmed its attendance to the rescheduled 12th Asean Summit in Cebu, an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

DFA Assistant Secretary Lan Cruz said that based on a report from Ambassador Isaac Carrance, the country's envoy to Seoul, what remained to be determined was whether South Korea will be represented by its President Roh Moo-hyun or by Prime Minister Han Myung-sook.

Earlier, the Japanese reported based on unofficial channels that Japan has also confirmed its attendance.

The two Northeast Asian neighbors, plus China, India, Australia, and New Zealand were the dialogue partners of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations which were supposed to the Cebu meetings before those were moved by host Philippines on Dec. 6, or two days before the summit opened.

Double and sometimes precarious weeks have now Manila's initial request for the postponement of the summit due to preaching typhoon "Seniang."

Four officials have repeatedly denied speculation that the last-minute decision was prompted by an alleged threat plot on the Japanese Chinese and economic in Manila against Charter change.

Last Friday, Mariciano Paynor, head of the summit's national organizing committee, announced that the nine other Asean members have sent assurances of their attendance.

But Cruz yesterday explained that the DFA supposes to announce the formal replies from all the 11 point nations on the newly "proposed" dates of the summit, which is from Jan. 11 to 13, 2007.

Water rates up starting Jan. 1

For page A1

Jesse Hamidin, Maynilad urges consumers to manage wisely, and households would not feel the increase because the industrial and commercial consumers would shoulder the tariff adjustment.

But, households will pay lower rates.

Under this scheme, households will pay P1.19.24 for the first 10 cubic meters, or lower than the current rate of P1.24.34, said a Maynilad corporate planning officer, who asked not to be named.

For households consuming 30 cubic meters, they will pay P522.25 a month instead of the current rate of P545.77.

In the next years, water rates of Manila Water will go up At every per cubic meter.

Inflation rate

The new water rate is 6.2 percent higher than the present rate. The increase is in accordance with the inflation rate the financial formula Office recorded for the year.

As a result, Manila Water will be charging its 5.6 million customers an all-in average tariff rate of P28.68 per cubic meter starting next month, from P27.04 per cubic meter.

Consumers using 20 cubic meters a month will be paying P32 more on the average for a total of P628.40.

For households, Manila Water will be charging P45.63 (P6.305 per cubic meter) for the first 10 cubic meters, up from P60.78.

For the next 10 cubic meters, the charge will be P74.70 (P7.47 per cubic meter), up from P72.

The next 20 cubic meters will run P995.40, or P13.27 per cubic meter.

A family of six in Metro Manila consumes an average of 30 cubic meters of water a month. The mean that its monthly water charge will increase from P380.36 to P398.40.

The P20 in mechanism allows the two water concessionaires to recover losses arising from a weakening peso because they pay dollar-denominated concession fees to the MWSS and foreign loans from abroad to fund expansion and improve their pipelines.

Under the rate and capital restructuring agreement (CORA) with creditors, Maynilad is allowed to increase its rates by P3.45 to P4.35 per cubic meter to enable it to service its debt of $200 million, according to MWSS Deputy Administrator Mario Ong.

"This is lower than the P4.35 per cubic meter charged last year," Ong said.

Maynilad needs the new tariff rates to improve its financial viability and regain the trust of investors, according to the rehabilitation plan approved by a court and its creditors.

Cesa said Maynilad's FCDA accounted for 3 percent.

Maynilad was represented as Dec. 3. Blessing Builders SMC Holdings and First Metro Pacific Holdings will take over the water company in January.

The winning consortium has vowed to put in $500 million to service the ailing water company that still has 6% percent in non-revenue water (NRW).

NRW refers to water losses due to pilferages and busted pipes.

MORE a report from Cyrill Quiambao, Inquirer Research

IN THE KNOW

MANILA WATER CO. INC. (MWCI) AND MAYNILAD Water Services Inc., are the two private companies that took over the state-owned Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in August 1997.

The concession agreement assigned the 25 years the east zone to the Ayala-led MWCI and the west zone to Maynilad, whose majority shareholder was the Lopez family's Benpres Holdings.

Since then, MWCI has been servicing over 5.mil lion people in Makati, Mandaluyong, Quezon City, some parts of Manila, San Juan, Taguig and Pateros.

In January 2003, the profitable operations of Manila Water led the company to offer 854.26 million of its shares to the public, about half of which was set aside for international investors.

However, more as MWCI has proved successful in its venture, Maynilad has experienced various problems.

In compliance with the contract, Maynilad submitted to all of Manila (except San Andres and Sta. Ana), parts of Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Pandacan, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, Malabon and some towns of Cavite province, and up a $326 million performance bond and assumed 50 percent or $500 million of MWSS' foreign debt (as part of its concession fee agreement).

This debt doubled to 2000 after the peso dropped drastically. In March 2001, Maynilad stopped paying the concession fees.

Citing "compelling financial, regulatory and natural causes," Maynilad announced in December 2003, that it planned to return the water concession to the MWSS. Under the contract, such a move would result in the forfeiture of the performance bond.

Maynilad filed a petition before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court seeking relief from creditors, saying it was undergoing corporate rehabilitation and would not be able to meet its maturing debts. In December 2003, the court stopped creditors from collecting payment from the water firm.

But the Supreme Court ruled that in June 2004, the Quezon City court's order. thus allowing the MWSS to draw on the performance bond which could cover the unpaid concession fees. The government was finally able to transfer the franchise the control of the Land Bank of the Philippines in January 2005.

In July 2006, a Quezon City court approved another arbitration plan which aimed to give the debt-ridden Maynilad its second wind. In accordance with the plan, Benpres Holdings transferred its 84 percent stake worth $217 million to the government. The government, in return, agreed to assume Maynilad's $50 million debt to foreign and local bank creditors.

The government then sought to bid out its 84 percent stake in Maynilad to private companies. With its shares privatize Maynilad, the government also saved paying $217 million in combined financial assistance and subscription fees. The consortium bid price was set at $68.4 million. This was on top of the required $326 million performance bond.

On Dec. 7, the MWSS formally awarded the government's stake to the consortium of JMG Holdings Inc. and Metro Pacific Holdings Inc. after its offer of $447.25 million topped MWCI's $388.86 million bid.

(MCI-MPH will continue Maynilad's operations on the west zone until 2022. Inquirer Research

Suspected guns-for-hire held in Abra congressman's killing

For page A1

injury politics into what happened in Ban."

Philippine National Police officials said at least 10 witnesses and suspects in the Bersamin case had been invited for questioning. An unspecified number of the suspected links to gun-for-hire syndicates were still in police custody, said Director Arturo Venzon of the PNP's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

A special PNP task force has been set up to coordinate with police in Quezon City and Abra to investigate the attack on the 62-year-old Bersamin and his bodyguard on Saturday after the lawmaker had just attended the wedding of his niece at Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City's New Manila district.

The P200,000 reward was put up for anyone who could provide information on the killings.

Sketches of gunman

"There is no definite lead yet. There is also no definite motive yet," Venzon told a news conference. But he said that the preferred angle remained one of their top research angles, although a personal motive was also possible.

The CIDG also generated artist's sketches of the alleged man based on descriptions provided by Bersamin's driver, Allan Sawadan, and 13-year-old Kelly Boy Cabalo, who were both wounded in the attack.

Based on the sketches, the gunman was in his late 30s, at least 5'5" in height, of medium build and dark-complexioned.

Venzon also announced a mobile phone number (0917-8975...) through which the public could give tips or information that could help in the investigation. He added that a 24-hour outpost had been set up in New Manila to continue the investigation.

At a press conference, Bersamin called on the PNP and the Commission on Elections to "ensure peace and order to prevent a bloody election which appears not to be kicked."

Police Santa Claus

In a privilege speech, Isabela Rep. Rodito Albano III bewailed the "distinct condition of peace and order" in the urban centers and countryside.

"I am for policemen dressing up as Santa Claus and patrolling our malls, but we need more police forces fighting criminals on the ground—beyond the air-conditioned comforts of shopping malls," he said.

He said Bersamin's slaying should not be just another statistic in the growing body count of so many unsolved murders in this country."

Albano cited the assassinations of former Representatives Modesto Espinosa, Henry Lanot, Roilo Golez and Benjamin Mendiola, and lately, the reported foiled slay plot on Senate Majority Leader Francisco Tatad and the failed bomb attack on Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski Jr.

Pattern of attacks

"The Bersamin murder should not be allowed to become the certain extinct of a violent election season," warned Palawan Rep. Antonio Alvarez, echoing warnings of Presidential Management Secretary Ronaldo Puno, chairman of Lakas-Kampi-CMD party, the Arroyo political party, the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino.

Negrillo said he saw a pattern of "ruthless attacks against public officials, especially members of Congress."

Said Deputy Minority Leader Abraham Kahlil "Sukarn" Mitra: "I hope that this will not be a prelude of how elections will be conducted. The military should forge the holiday break and immediately set up anti-guerrilla operations so that elections will be conducted peacefully and orderly."

But Chief Supt. Samuel Pagkilan, PNP spokesperson, said the recent incidents involving congressmen were not "a portent of things to come." He added that "these incidents are cause for concern, but we can't say we are alarmed."

Gonzalez Chair Benjamin Abalos said politicians should not hesitate to ask the agency for police escorts if they think their lives were in danger during the election period.

"If there's really a serious threat to their lives, then we will provide them with more policemen for bodyguards," Abalos said. Up to five policemen will be made available to politicians during the election period from Jan. 15 to June 14. With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Nicarie Papa, Jerome Aning and Margaret C. Orvin, and Nimmo Calonzo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

A POLICE investigator inspects the body of Rep. Luis Bersamin after gunmen shot him and his bodyguard after a wedding in New Manila, Quezon City. ALVIN MORALES

AFP readies 3-year plan to finish off Reds

For page A1

guards, Andrew Ilo and Bonifacio Bajamonde. Bersamin was shot dead in his head on unidentified men—both civilians.

Espenon said he had been answering with top regional commanders to assess Dylan Bunlay-Layo, which was named in January 2006.

"The assessments we are coming up with are very critical in formulating our future actions as regards to addressing the threat of the communist terrorist movement," the Abra Vanyal, and other threat groups," he said.

A 'great success'

The military considers Dylan Bunlay-Layo to have been a "great success" story, based on its estimates, it brought down the NPA's armed strength from 12,000 five years ago to 7,000.

That's equally real. That's a big momentum. We'll take advantage of the momentum," Espenon said.

In June, Mr. Arroyo released P1 billion to boost the counter-insurgency campaign. Police executives then said the military had been given a two-year deadline to finish off the communist rebels.

But military officials, however, said they understand the President's order to mean that she wanted the communist insurgency finished off by the end of her term in 2010.

The military has some stake for the flaring up of assassinations and abductions of peasant leaders and activists, mostly in the provinces.

Military authorities denied that they were behind the killings, which has exceeded 700 since 2001 when Mr. Arroyo assumed the presidency, hailed as independent estimates. The Bayan count is 862.

Main Commission

Under pressure from the international community, Mr. Arroyo in August formed a commission headed by former Supreme Court Associate Justice Jose Melo to investigate the killings. But human rights groups and left-wing organizations have boycotted its hearings, questioning its independence.

According to initial reports, the military's new strategy would involve the Philippine National Police in the counter-insurgency campaign in a greater extent.

In October, Mr. Arroyo signed Executive Order No. 546 which gave the PNP equal status in the counter-insurgency campaign.

Civilian volunteers

Under the order, the President directed the PNP to actively support the Armed Forces in suppressing insurgency and other internal security threats.

It authorized the PNP to deputize its own civilian volunteers or the barangay tanods as police auxiliaries, on the same survey that the AFP is authorized to deputize its own civilian volunteers or Cafgus (Civilian Auxiliary Force Geographical Units).

AFP public information chief Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said the new internal peace plan would address the "changes in strategy, methodology and presentation" of the threat groups. With reports from Ephraim Aguilar and Bobby Lalusbo, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Lawyer doubts Bolante still in US jail

For page A1

July 7 and was told that the US Embassy in Manila had canceled his US visa because of an arrest warrant issued by the Philippine Senate.

The Senate launched a probe of the alleged fertilizer scam and invited Bolante to appear. When he failed to do so, the chamber issued the arrest warrant.

Bolante chose to be detained in the United States rather than be deported to Manila. The US government initiated removal proceedings against him, but he filed a petition for political asylum on Sept. 27.

Jakarta

Roque said he had spoken with a source who Bolante allegedly wanted to meet with in Jakarta sometime this month.

"That is the reason why I believe there's a chance he's on transit in the US," Roque said.

He said he had alerted lawyers belonging to human rights groups in Indonesia about Bolante's plan to go to Jakarta.

He asked his Indonesian counterparts to inform him should the former agriculture secretary show up in Jakarta.

Foreign Affairs

Roque also requested the human rights lawyers to tell the Indonesian government of Bolante's alleged offenses in the Philippines and his being wanted by the Senate.

"It should be the Department of Foreign Affairs that should do this, but it would not do so," Roque said.

"Since they are the ones who issued the passport, they should know where he goes," he said.

Roque said Indonesia should not give safe haven to Bolante.

Transit point

The lawyer said Bolante might use Indonesia as a transit point for allegedly illegally acquired funds, which could be transferred to banks in nearby Singapore.

Roque expressed one of the groups that filed an impeachment complaint against Mr. Arroyo earlier this year.

One of the issues raised in the complaint was the alleged government misuse of at least P728 million in fertilizer funds for the administration's electoral campaign.

BOLANTE'S sons are shown after a court hearing.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo welcomes an overseas Filipino worker at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Monday.

OFWs get VIP treatment, treats at Naia

By Nikko Dizon

FILIPINO WORKER ROBERICK DE GUZMAN, 29, son of a farming couple in Bulacan, works hard cleaning cars in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in order to save money and someday buy a vehicle for his family back home.

He can use his hard-earned money for other goals now. Arriving home for the Christmas holiday yesterday, he was the lucky winner of a property in a surprise raffle for returning OFWs (gifts were here sponsored by the Manila International Airport Authority). He also got gift certificates and a vacation package worth P50,000 from the Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA).

The raffle draw was part of the government's "Pasasalubong Salubong sa OFWs," spearheaded by Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the highlight of which was President Arroyo personally welcoming them home and handing out giveaways yesterday afternoon.

Even departing OFWs were included in the raffle. One heart-warming winner's story was that of John Estevez, who sold his tricycle to raise the money needed to be able to leave for Kuwait in January, [illegible].

Yesterday, hours before boarding his flight, he was the lucky winner of a tricycle.

Estevez's wife cried over the marvelous surprise, said Connie Bengag, media affairs chief of the Maia.

Another departing OFW, Rebeca Mangalan, also won a tricycle. Then there was arriving OFW Armando Sales, 42, a father of three, who will also be bringing a tricycle home to Bacolod, as well as gift certificates and a vacation package worth P50,000 from the PTA.

Million dollars and decade prosperity

of entertainment. Name "Dito" in cases in area was free for anyone's asking. Airport staff were dressed in barongs and saras—welcome attire usually reserved for arriving heads of state.

A Maia official said it was President Arroyo herself who wanted the "red carpet treatment" for the Filipino workers carrying in the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) because of their invaluable contribution to the country's economy.

Over 10 million Filipinos are working overseas, funneling billions of dollars in remittances that have kept the Philippine economy afloat.

An estimated 2,000 OFWs arrive at the Naia facility, according to OWWA figures.

Ms Arroyo led the group of government officials who welcomed home the Filipino passengers on the afternoon flights of Etihad, Gulf Air and Japan Air Lines.

"We're very surprised, but this is nice. It made us happy," Jessi Ramirez told the INQUIRER as she held her three-month old son in her arms while her husband Roland tried to fit all the freebies they received at the airport in their already-stuffed Duty Free bags.

The couple came home to spend Christmas with their families after four years in Bahrain, where Roland works as an architect.

Joselin de la Peña, 29, who works in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, said this was the second time that he received a "red carpet welcome" from the President. "I'm very happy with this welcome," he said.

Arroyo also lauded our local delicacies scrapped in favor of the Filipino passengers.

The OWWA-sponsored raffle for OFWs will run until Dec. 31 at major international airports in Clark, Cebu, Davao and Zamboanga.

Fresh Cha-cha push seen after Christmas

From page A1

He said, it is the will of the people which should be followed," Enrile said.

He said Mr. Arroyo had repeatedly stated that she wanted reforms through Charter change.

Let Christmas pass

"That is what she is looking at but (which) I cannot really say but do not interfere with what Congress is doing ... with what (Rep.) (Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines) is doing," Enrile said.

He added: "I don't want to talk right now because I don't think when I will say it right because (if) I can say it we are just putting aside at the moment changing the Constitution."

Perez Secretary Ignacio Bunye also said that Mr. Arroyo had been very open about her support for fundamental change.

"But I think maybe we can let this Christmas season pass. Let's talk about other matters for the time being," Bunye added.

Barzin: Just but not war

"We have no interest as in the timing (of Cha-cha), we have to ask the people (about) that."

Both Enrile and Bunye are used carrying members of Lakas, the party at the forefront of Cha-cha crusade.

In Dagupan City, De Venecia said he was "disillusioned" by the way efforts to push Charter change had turned out...but that "in the end, we still triumph."

"We have not come to end the war," he told reporters Sunday.

"As long as there's God, we're going to fight. We are pushing for constitutional reforms. We don't have a selfish agenda."

Bishops and lawmakers

De Venecia said he would call all political parties and leaders of civil society to a summit to discuss constitutional reforming.

Pursuing voluntary honorary and Dupe, yesterday's protesters marched to the St. Mary's Academy Monument on Pastor de Roxas in Makati City starting at 9 a.m.

They were later joined by some opposition lawmakers and Catholic Bishops' barzin Tobias of Marinduque and Deogratias Miguez of Cubao-on. The two bishops made no speeches.

It would be a truly very merry Christmas if we make a final push to oust Gloria," Lubao rig Mayor said in a statement. "That would also be a fitting follow-up to the prayer rally ... This regime has not got a shred of credibility left to govern this country."

Bolong distanced himself from the opposition' call for Mr. Arroyo's removal from office, telling reporters: "I have no grievance against GMA."

Even militants surprised

Taking the stage, Bagong Pamana Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano called Mr. Arroyo a "squatter in Malacañang."

"This time around, we will make sure that we will be able to send the message clear," he said.

The unannounced demonstration apparently even caught some participants by surprise. Some militant leaders said they only received instructions to join the rally through text messages.

Traffic was standstill along Ayala Avenue, compelling traffic enforcers to reroute traffic.

Also seen mingling with the crowd were former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Akbayan party-list Rep. Rafa Hunt Crewe-Barbazal and Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipinas Rep. Agapito "Boy" Aquino.

"At 1 on 1, the groups present at the prayer rally (on Sunday) were not invited and they went to convene it here," Bagong told reporters.

Palace unimpressed

Aside from Charter change, the rally to raised issues like poverty, the fuhlo rape case and the "Hello Garci" controversy.

Ichitica was unimpressed by the size of Sunday's rally organized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and backed by other religious groups, the political opposition, some businessmen, militants and leaders of civil society.

Why turnout was low

"A number of the opposition were there, some senators and personalities were there to explain the events because they thought it would be a black mark on the administration. But it came to naught...the crowd was very thin," Ichitica said in a separate interview on radio dzBB.

Organizers had predicted they could rally up to half a million people. But only up to 20,000, by some police estimates, showed up.

"At God would have it, what they expected did not materialize," said Ermita.

The chief coordinator of Sunday's rally, ex-Mexican Ambassador Henrietta de Villa, offered several reasons for the relatively low turnout.

Topping her list was the administration's claim that protest rallies might turn violent and risk "somebody dramatic(ally) some people" from coming, she told the businesses.

"The warnings were tactical," said Bhgy. Pedro Quitorio, CIDG spokesperson.

A signal to Malacañang

De Villa also said she was told by El Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde that some of his members were blocked by police along some roads leading to the Luneta.

Asked if the low turnout might embolden administration allies to revive their Cha-cha plan, De Villa said: "I hope not. They should take it as a signal that the people are wide awake."

De Villa said the administration's curtailment on convening a constituent assembly might have also been a factor.

Another was the change to rebellion from the original rally claim of Friday to Sunday, said Quitorio.

De Villa said the public, especially government officials, should not lose sight of the rally's call for every Filipino to have "a new outlook and attitude on governance."

Fr. Romeo Intengan of the Ateneo de Manila University's Center for Investigative Studies said the Church might have held back on its rally mobilization plans.

He said that unlike in 1997, when a similar rally drew hundreds of thousands of people, the Archdiocese of Manila this time did not cancel Masses and tell people to go instead to the Luneta.

"It was not a full mobilization," Intengan said. "If the Church) were not in a fighting mode after the Ichitica (case) lashed claim on the constituent assembly."

Ramon Casiple, executive director of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform, disputed claims that Church influence was waning. He said it was precisely the threat of a big Church-led rally that forced Cha-cha forces to back off. With reports from Christine U. Figueroa and Norman Bordadora, and Sikolohiya Antolin-Fortuno, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Bunye says character change meant for all

From page A1

failed in its mission of shaping the character of the Filipinos.

"To ask for the character change is actually to ask for moral upheaval or a moral revolution, which is basically the jurisdiction of the Church," Santiago told reporters.

"This is a confusion, an identification, on the part of the Catholic bishops that they had failed all these centuries, during which we observed Roman Catholicism, to shaping the character of the Filipino (Catholic, "she said.

"They should look their houses and ask for forgiveness, if that is the case."

Church role

Bunye said Mr. Arroyo supported the Church in "pushing for a complete moral transformation."

"Moral values are the foundation of a stable democratic society and we hope that the Church will continue to take the lead in this advocacy," he said.

He said transforming values was at the core of the public climate for change.

The CBCP secretary general, Msgr. Juanito Figueroa, had said that questions surrounding Mr. Arroyo's disputed election victory in 2004, as well as other political problems, were compelling factors for Sunday's rally.

Moral regeneration

Bunye said religious leaders were well within their rights to speak out on issues affecting their constituency lives, specifically on "moral values."

"The Church continues to be an important and relevant stakeholder in Philippine society. He took in the religious leaders to spearhead the moral reassessment of Filipinos," he said.

He said moral regeneration was within the province of religious institutions.

Applies to priests, too

Asked if Cha-cha was a moral issue, Bunye said: "Everything is moral in a sense. Even those who are opposed to it say that this is a theological issue. Since they are proposing character change, which we associate with moral upbringing, moral values, then the religious institution would play a very big role."

Congressional leaders said character change must also include the men of the cloth.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula, the House of Representatives' point man in the failed Charter change (Cha-cha) drive, supported the call for character change but stressed that it "may be needed but as well, if not more, by those opposing (Cha-cha)."

New Year's resolution

"It's applicable to all, maybe even applicable from the senate," said Jaraula, citing what he said was the failure of Church leaders to openly endorse moral celibacy and prevent "erring priests."

Bicam Majority Leader Nograles urged the Church and everyone—including "bishops, businessmen, media, administration and opposition (politicians), not only congressmen"—should examine themselves.

"That should be our New Year's resolution. Everybody" said Nograles.

He also said the Church should not meddle in politics. "Whatever happened to the separation of Church and State?" he asked.

'Cycle of desperation'

Speaker Jose de Venecia said that character change was not all that was needed.

"Even if you change the hearts of men but if you don't change the system of government, the country will face the same cycle of failure and desperation," he said.

"So we need a change in the system of government in order that a painful change in the hearts of men can affect reforms in society," With a report from Michael Lim Ubac

CANDLES are lit during Sunday's Catholic Church-led prayer rally at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila. EDWARD

Cold wind keeps 'Tomas' ...

From page A1

The prevailing northeast monsoon, on the other hand, would keep the storm from intensifying into a supertyphoon the way Typhoon "Seniang" (Utor) did early this month, Gay said. Pure typhoons feed on warm, rich water in the last four months, killing about 1,400 people.

The northeast monsoon blowing cold air into the archipelago will keep it from getting stronger, he said. "It's not getting a weather disturbance that's warm, it's cold air," he said.

The eastern parts of the archipelago, particularly the Mayon Volcano area southeast of Manila, are still reeling from landslides and flooding brought on by Supertyphoon "Reming" (Durian) on Nov. 30, which left more than 1,200 people dead.

Nine days later, Seniang hit the country, killing more than 20 people and forcing the government to postpone twin Asian summits in Cebu City. "Milenyo" (Xangsane), in September, and "Yoyong" (Chanchu) one month later also caused significant damage.

The UN last week asked donors for US$46-million (over Pb 9 million) to provide tens of thousands of people with food and shelter.

65-kph winds

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration estimated Tomas to be 1,290 kilometers east of Luzon.

Surface and satellite data showed that it was packing maximum sustained winds of 65 kilometers per hour and gustiness of up to 80 kph. Tomas was moving northwest at 19 kph.

The high-pressure area over the archipelago, said Gay, was making Tomas veer more to the north than west and is expected not to make landfall.

It is expected to be 980 km east of northern Luzon this afternoon and 670 km east-northeast of Basco, Batanes.

On Thursday afternoon, it is expected to be 880 km northeast of Basco.

Okinawa-bound

"It will take a northwest path before taking a northeast track toward Okinawa in Japan," Gay said.

Dagupan said the storm would not affect any part of the country today but a moderate to strong northeasterly surface wind flow would prevail over Luzon and the Visayas.

An easterly wave will also be over Mindanao.

As a result of the windflows and the easterly wave, the eastern section of Luzon will have cloudy skies with rains, while eastern Visayas and the whole Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms.

The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with light rains, Pagasa said.

It added that moderate to strong winds blowing from the northeast will prevail over Luzon and Visayas, and the seaboard will bring three areas will be moderate to rough.

"Elsewhere, winds will be light to moderate blowing from the east and northeast with slight to moderate seas," Pagasa said.

The Philippines is hit by about 20 typhoons and storms a year. Tomas (or Trami), the name of a devastating tree in Vietnamese is the 20th this season. With an AP report

Humans can track scent like dogs, but not as well

From page A1

nose to the ground and crawling along with their bottoms in the air.

The researchers found that those who were asked to track a chocolate scent across a mental maze, inched along at a speed of, well, one inch a second.

Though their pace accelerated to two inches a second after its first retracing session, it seemed clear enough why workers, like the freshmen of the Falahan, relied on eyesight as it is how we animals track.

The research here did not find a dog versus human competition because the dogs were in a different league; sometimes emitting a dragged target (a dead bird) from the starting line and making a beeline for it.

The purpose of the experiment was to inquire whether having two nostrils spaced slightly apart helped track a scent, just as hearing two ears enabled the brain to locate the source of sound.

But the dogs could not report what they were doing and objected to the procedures, like being put on a leash.

So the Berkeley researchers, led by Brian Sobel and Jess Porter, chose mice—the favorite experimental animals—psychology department contenders.

As they reasoned in the task, the scuttling characters sported a recently extended nose of the behavior of tracking clues, like sniffing faster to take in more olfactory information.

Sobel said it was not a huge surprise to find that people could track a scent, but no one had successfully tested the possibility.

New York Times News Service

Rosales back in hospital after fiery homily in rally

By Christian V. Esguerra

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO ROSALES was back in the hospital more than a week after delivering a fiery homily at a rally denouncing the alleged administration moves to overhaul the Constitution.

The 74-year-old prelate was confined again at the Cardinal Santos Memorial Hospital in San Juan due to an intestinal illness he has been suffering since last week, according to Pradey Barrameda, the archdiocese's media officer.

Barrameda revealed that Rosales first entered the hospital Wednesday and was allowed by his doctors to leave the hospital to attend the prayer rally—provided that he would return afterward.

"That was his agreement with his doctors," Barrameda told the Inquirer yesterday.

Rosales appeared weak, his voice hoarse when he concelebrated the Mass with 110 other bishops at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila.

Breaking his usual silence on political issues, he asked that the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' position that any change in the Charter should come through a constitutional convention.

"What Imelda did into fear is the spirit of man, not the spirit of the law moving (me)," he said in Filipino in his homily, an applause he received repeated by organizers at around 50,000. (Misc placed the crowd at 15,000 to 30,000).

Rosales called for a different kind of "Charcha," one that would advocate "character change," and Charter change.

"There must be reform in many of us — in effect," he said.

Parts of the cardinal's homily sounded fiery despite his weak condition that afternoon.

Barrameda said he had to be confined Wednesday following what had been initially thought of as food poisoning. He said the prelate was diagnosed to be suffering from "diarrhea compounded by ulcer."

The Inquirer learned that Rosales suffered a bout with ulcer after attending a luncheon at Cardinal Sin's on the day before.

Barrameda said Rosales was expected to be discharged today.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 19, 2006
3rd Week of Advent
1st Reading: Jdg 13:2-7, 24-25
Gospel: Luke 1:5-25

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah, belonging to the priestly class of Abijah. Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, also belonged to a priestly family. Both of them were upright in the eyes of God and lived blamelessly in accordance with all the laws and commands of the Lord, but they had no child. Elizabeth could not have any and now they were both very old.

Now while Zechariah and those with him were fulfilling their office in full course by law, according to the custom of the priests, to burn incense, it fell to his lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense, at the time of offering incense all the people were praying outside; it was then that an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. On seeing the angel, Zechariah was deeply troubled and fear took hold of him.

But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah, for unnoted your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will bring joy and gladness to you and many will rejoice at his birth.

"He will be great in the eyes of the Lord. Never he shall drink wine or strong drink, but he will be filled with holy spirit even from his mother's womb. Through him many of the people of Israel will turn to the Lord their God. He himself will go before the Lord with the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah, he will reconcile fathers and children, and lead the disobedient to the ideas and righteousness, in order to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel, who stands before God, and I am the one sent to speak to you and bring you this good news! His words will come true in their time. But you would not believe and now you will be silent and unable to speak until this has happened."

Meanwhile the people waited for Zechariah, and they were surprised that he delayed so long in the sanctuary. When he finally appeared, he could not speak to them and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He remained mute and made signs to them.

When his time of service was completed, Zechariah returned home and soon after his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. For five months she kept to herself, remaining at home, and thinking, "What is the Lord doing for me! This is to take the mercy and the taking away my public disgrace."

Commentary:

God is drawing near to us and we practice saying what is coming with marvelous stories we hear of Messiah and his harem wife. Yet an angel appears to her and tells her of her child's birth and the child's strength and consecration to God who will deliver Israel. And himself is amazed and hurts. And the story is repeated. Zechariah, a priest, and his wife, are then an. But they are just and obedient, and elderly. So an angel appears now to Elizabeth's husband and tells him the self-concern and hear is one. But Zechariah doubts...how? and Gabriel must him into dumbness and the child's there. They will live with the vision, already as it [illegible]

God's nothing to be considered in us. Do we believe?

FOR THIS STAINLESS STEEL MICROWAVE OVEN, BAKING IS A PIECE OF CAKE

GE imagination at work

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Deadly label

LAST SATURDAY, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER Norberto Gonzales urged that left-leaning party-list candidates be labeled as communists to caution voters, particularly soldiers and policemen, against electing what he called "democracy's enemies" to Congress. "It is important to show soldiers and police what groups are being used by the communists to continue their bid for elections on the public," he said.

EDITORIAL

We thought the Cold War was over, but here we have the national security adviser warning leftists as "communists." There was a time when labeling someone a "communist" or "leftist" practically set him up as a target for assassination by government forces. Now it seems, the time is coming back, so small thanks to the national security adviser.

The terms Left and Right were first used in France during the French Revolution when the aristocrats sat on the right side of the assembly and the commoners sat on the left. From that time on the Right has been associated with ideology that favors an elite social group and the Left has been associated with ideology that favors "the masses."

Today, "Left" refers to the complex of individuals or organizations that advocate liberal, often radical, measures to bring about change in the established order, especially in politics, to achieve equality, freedom and well-being for the masses. A leftist is a person or group that adheres to the left wing on political issues. A communist is one who believes in a social and economic formation based on a classless social system and public ownership of the means of production.

Before the Cold War to be called a leftist in the United States was not so bad. But things changed after World War II. Writer Geoff Price said that one of the major problems in Americans political consciousness today comes from a misrepresentation of the political spectrum. "This is partly the result of a deliberate effort to put all of American's enemies (fascists and communists) into the same basket after World War II, and a deliberate effort by the Americans Right" to classify everything that they oppose as "leftist," he said.

After World War II, Republicans tried to portray the Democratic Party of Roosevelt and Truman as "Red," thereby associating "liberalism" with "communism." The "Red" labeling worked well in the 1950s, especially during the McCarthy era, and created a lasting impact on how Americans viewed politics. Filipino politicians imitated the McCarthyist tactics, with the result that liberals and leftists were demonized as "communists."

When Ferdinand E. Marcos imposed martial law in 1972, he said his purpose was "to save the republic [from communists] and reform society." But Patricio N. Abinales, in a paper for the Center for Southeast Asian Studies in Kyoto University said that when Marcos became more repressive, Filipinos began to doubt the validity of his anti-communist crusade. The Communist Party of the Philippines took off after it raised them in Maoist rhetoric, "Indigenized" its strategy and became the leading anti-imperialist force and advocate of nationalism.

In the 1980s, the moderates and anti-communist politicians realized not to Left. "It an old way," Abinales said, "what happened in the 1970s and early 1980s was that being communist . . . was becoming acceptable to many, especially in the urban areas. To be Left was hip, and respect for the Left grew as the dictatorship began to weaken."

Thus, to be "leftist" became politically acceptable. Leftists were encouraged to go above ground, and the rules/definition of the "legitimization" of the Left was the inclusion of a provision to the new Constitution for the election of party-list representatives who would constitute 20 percent of the total number of congressmen.

The party-list provisions gives voice to the under-represented sectors like labor, peasants, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities and the youth. Since 1998 left-leaning groups have been getting more seats in the House of Representatives: two out of 13 party-list representatives in 1998, seven out of 20 in 2001 and 10 out of 24 in 2004.

Now Gonzales would set back political progress, thus not leftist groups and individuals from Congress, and worse, set them up as targets for assassination for being "democracy's enemies." This is the sort of rhetoric that legitimizes the unabated killing of activists and militants. Such rhetoric should have no place in a free, democratic and civilized society.

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Muffled crisis

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IT HAUNTS SO HAUNTINGLY AMONG FAMILY SHRINES page one. "Deprivation of access to water is a silent crisis," says the United Nations Human Development Report 2006. But like sheltering army from chronic hunger, this muffled emergency escapes the press. And it is tolerated by the affluent powerful even as it kills more children through disease than war.

Today's "crisis in water and sanitation is, almost all, a crisis of the poor," says the new UN Development Program study, "Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Water Crisis." In Sweden or Japan, water-borne disease is a subject for history books. But in the Philippines, Indonesia or Laos, it involves hospital wards and morgues.

"People living in the slums of Jakarta, Manila, Mumbai and Sub-Saharan shantytowns of cities say [that] their neighbors in high income suburbs . . . keep their lawns green and swimming pools topped up," the study says. "[The poor] pay five to ten times more for water per unit than those in high-income areas of their own cities." Inside research indicates that the poorest "spend more than 10 percent of their household income on water."

This denies the picture of skewed wealth and political power. "Gated residents" have piped water in most homes. Only a quarter piped water reach the poorest 20 percent. And if trickles through rusted-out, manalapac apertures or trunk mounted tanks add to the cost.

"By reason of water," says the Koran, "we give life to everything." Beyond physical survival, water underpins health, economic growth. Infiltration of human pastoral "leaves to safe water is a fundamental human need and basic human right," former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan wrote.

It seems ages that the minerals needed by dozen humans life is about 20 liters a day. Globally, about 1.1 billion— roughly the population of India—can get less than a day. "That's a tenth of the average daily amount used in rich countries to flush toilets."

National water ministers "mask a system of water apartheid based on wealth, location and other markers." HDR 2006, for example, reveals that 80 out of every 100 Filipinos have access to improved water sources. That's behind Kenya's 82 but far better than Cambodia's 41.

Stark inequalities between provinces emerge in the Philippine Human Development Report 2005. Only three out of every 100 in Laguna lack for safe water sources. It is 51 for Maguindanao. And in Cebu, 28 of every 100 lack potable water. Integral users organized coalitions as protection in the latest of freshwater outbreaks within Cebu. "Not having access to water and sanitation is a public euphemism for people drinking from wells and ditches polluted with human and animal excrement."

The Asian Development Bank's "Key Indicators" reveals that most people deprived of decent water cluster in this region. Diarrhea is one of the top four killers of kids under five. World-wide, such kids lose 443 million school days. And the yearly death toll from diarrhea of six under-5 kids matches equivalent for London and New York combined.

"Unclean water and the resulting poor sanitation [pose] a threat that starts at birth," the report states. "The number of deaths associated with these risks dwarfs the number of deaths associated with [other] risk factors that receive much greater attention, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria."

And every year, rapids, baha' or dollar spent on water and sanitation generates, on average, eight in productivity gains and reduced costs.

"The water is the cornerstone of the economy," Hanoi Hoan wrote in "Las Montañas," describing 19th century Inca.

And in Aliaro and Manila, old sources are now have been overwhelmed by rapid urbanization and chronic underinvestment... Less than 4 percent of Metro Manila's population is connected to the sewer network."

Richer homes and large housing complexes build their own septic tanks. There are over a million units in Manila. About 40 percent of households have latrines.

But sludge treatment and disposal facilities are rare. So, 10 million people dump untreated waste into the Ilog Pasig. "The Pasig is one of the world's most polluted rivers," the study says. "Human waste comprises over 70 percent of the pollution load... And around one third of all illness in Manila is water related."

Sanitation blueprints were drawn up for draining the Pasig. But none moved beyond the planning board. "Governments and water companies have failed to develop a coherent strategy for tackling Manila's sanitation crisis."

Most poor households are not connected to municipal water systems. And many homes cannot afford the cost of connections—about three months' income for the poorest 10 percent. "Nationwide in Cebu found five patterns of water service: private connections, sari-sari—4 percent; public well—34 percent; private well—13 percent; public standpipe—8 percent; and neighbor-connected to water system—18 percent."

"Many publicly owned utilities are failing the poor, overcharging inefficiency and unaccountable," it is incompetent, majority in financing," says the report. And there are "increasingly unsafe solutions."

Some found license emerge from Brazil, Colombia, Senegal and South Africa. (1) "Political leadership matters"; and (2) "Progress depends on seeing sustainable targets in place—but not necessarily 'immunity' such a pure description. Even shortfalls no longer offer refuge from the death sentences.

The number of thousands, in particular, throws us back to the pre-mortal few days before the Tsunami struck. Some of the Thai Chinese were greeted dawn in church as he knelt on a pew to receive Holy Communion.

Possibly, I don't know why we are so desensitized that when we tolerate the killing of one group of people, we tolerate the killing of other groups of people. The more we are silent in the murder of other people, we invite the murder of ourselves. History does not link for lessons there. You agree to the pogroms of the Jews, you agree to the slaughter of yourself.

We do not stop the killings of journalists and political activists right now, we assure that the killings of journalists and political activists will be the norm in our postwar history. If not the bloodiest. We do not stop the killings of journalists and political activists right now, we raise a culture that says it is perfectly acceptable to dispatch your enemies in the next life. Here is nothing in the whole of the world or earth to deter you from it. That is a culture that like toxic rust, or an Arab curse, will befall all of us, and our children's children.

The bullet that finds the brains of other people will not lodge there permanently. It will find some, too.

If I wouldn't right, there's something in the bible that says as you sow, so shall you reap. It's true, whether you believe the bible or the Koran.

You sow death, you will reap death.

Reaping the whirlwind

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE LATEST CASUALTIES ARE ARMANDO LOS Reyes and his bodyguard. Reyes and his bodyguard emerged from the search of Mr. Carmelo Duarte and was about to board his car in the church yard when a couple of men walked up to him and his bodyguard from behind and shot them dead. The assassins gunned down his bodyguard first before they shot him in the head as he attacked second. He died on the spot.

The murder occurred only days after the attempted murder of Deng Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski. Jaworski had every reason to flatter and repeat, "Hinaan na pero" at those saying he had done this to himself as an election gimmick. The date of his car mind out the idea, unless he was the kind of devil may care, science take-all, risk-taker who would shoot death by the dozen if his work gave to matter. He was not at the polls. His car was enlisted to a blasted pile of junk. But for the fact that the explosion incited under the hood of his car enabled smoke before exploding, giving him time to scramble out. Jaworski would soon be playing the harp with the saints in the celestial heights.

Before this, the son of a mayor of Hamtpuya was also shot dead a couple of weeks ago. Then got the details now, but I heard the mayor being interviewed on TV, his voice quaking with grief. He was not expected to have settled scores or "others did this," but whose identities he wanted to know very well, as deeply suspected.

I do not know what specific motives impelled those shootings. Were politics the always been a little murderous, and Jaworski himself points to drugs as the cause of the attempt on his life. He has apparently been at odds with the drug lords of Pasig.

I do not know what specific motives impelled those slayings, or some slayings, but I do know why they have happened, and why they will happen again and again and more heavily as more days pass. And why they pass the May elections. They have happened and will happen because we have failed to stop the killings. Or more specifically, they have happened and will happen because we have failed to stop the killings of political activists and journalists in the province. The one is to the other as cause and effect. Very direct cause and very direct effect.

Not quite incidentally, the killings of activists and journalists continue unabated to this day in the same time that Jaworski's car was bombed, a business tycoon and then wife were murdered in their home in Cebu province. It is not clear why they were murdered aside from the idea of "culture of impunity" seized almost same. Lawyer Gil Gopil had just left the court after a hearing when he was gunned down in his van by motorcycle-riding gunmen. Rogue States's Gaston Ortigas's wife was killed in his home when two men burst into it and shot him dead. Even home and hearth no longer offer protection to potential victims in this country.

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soldiers and police what groups are being used by the communists to continue their bid (emphasis on the public." If he had thought to sign their death warrants, he could not have been more bloodthirsty.

But he has clearly turned out, the bloodletting won't just go the party-list or opposition candidates' way. Barely had the ink dried on my mouth, or the ink from my pen, when the slayings and/or near slayings shook took place with chilling rapidity and with the same brazenness of total contempt of law to destroy that makes "impunity" such a pale description. Even churches no longer offer refuge from the death merchants.

The number of thousands, in particular, throws us back to the pre-mortal few days before the Tsunami struck. Some of the Thai Chinese were greeted dawn in church as he knelt on a pew to receive Holy Communion.

Possibly, I don't know why we are so desensitized that when we tolerate the killing of one group of people, we tolerate the killing of other groups of people. The more we are silent in the murder of other people, we invite the murder of ourselves. History does not link for lessons there. You agree to the pogroms of the Jews, you agree to the slaughter of yourself.

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A Christmas story

THE BOOK "RISING LIGHT SUNDAY'S RALLY addressed, aside from partnering a big sound system, a lot of issues bloaming hotly in Southeast Cardinal Rosales as noted in reiterating the "Church position" that Charter change should be made by a constitutional convention, "whose members would be elected and not beholden to the power holders." From the statements, the cardinal seems more open to change than other leading prelates, but he said two things are necessary: the "right time" and "unity" among the people.

The Church, however, is not alone in Cha-cha to happen. For Charter will always be those who stand to benefit from the change, and those who will be deadly. Among the latter will be those elected in May 2007, who will be asked to give up their posts in a shift to a parliamentary and the new president in 2010 who could be reduced to a figurehead or see his post abolished.

The birthpangs until there should be a change is character of the people first, reportedly politicians, before Cha-cha. But his admonition spins that even if people want to vote this economic, they would find it impossible under the present system because they write a more charter chemistries. That is what happened in Thailand recently.

* * *

Erli Pandakman, headcity Cebu de Venecia, is composed of members who have lost a child. Last Saturday, these members ushered guests, led by President Macapagal-Arroyo, to the inauguration of their brand-new 21st Century Center in the capital's compound in Barangay Fifth. Quezon City. The center will be a haven where other bereaved families can receive spiritual and psychological therapy and livelihood training, and where "give yourselves" will be claimed to make families in distress secure. The 264 members joined the Gawad to build the center on land donated by the DPWH designed for free by young architect Dan Galvez Jr. By the 264 means it was a triumph even for economics.

* * *

Gloria de Venecia conceived of this project after her daughter Ki perished in a terrible fire that gutted their Boston-style Village home on Dec. 26, 2004-2005. In her remarks, noted the fire was incident to the Mass celebrated by Most Reverend R. L. Lavin, which recalled how the prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven in a "chariot of fire." Ki, she said, was also taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire.

Pilar Aquino Lim drew wars a yellow and green butterfly that perched on Speaker Jose de Venecia's shoulder, and which she even elsewhere fans noticed on the front row could shake off. "The butterfly is the symbol of Ki since her funeral and Gina told Ki was untouching her father that morning.

During the impromptu fellowship after the lunch, with two-thirds of the crowd gone, some family members remembered Ki's lifetime was scary were made. A psychotherapist recovered with a healing university revealed that Ki had appeared for her in different sizes eighty could not and asked her to spend in her premises. Gina suggesting the blouse that she should wear, which had designs of yellow and green butterflies. She said she told the girl, whom she had never met, that she had two appointments that morning, but to keep her posted if they were cancelled. That was in the DPWH compound, she had a conversation with Ki in her mind. How would I recognize you? she asked the girl. Ki said she would let hovering around her.

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cinamon

at a butterfly. But there would be many butterflies around, the therapist said. Ki said she would have one that would be unique. Pure enough. Ki's wish the butterfly on his shoulder, completed, prompting Gina to ask if he was okay.

* * *

But the more startling revelation was made by Fr. Berlie Cipriano, former parish priest of Jesus Church in Makati and now assigned in Pasig. He revealed that on Dec. 23, 2004, a young girl came to the church and told him she wanted to make her confession. She was dressed in white, as he had to officiate at a wedding in half an hour. When he asked why she was so insistent, she said her days were numbered and she wanted to make sure she would go to heaven. She said she was going to die on Dec. 26 because it was her birthday. Fr. Cipriano was stunned but encouraged her to make her confession. He then left the confessional booth, but when he returned to the church, the girl was gone. He looked for her but could not find her. He asked the church guards if they had seen her, but they said they had not seen anyone. Fr. Cipriano was puzzled by the incident, but he did not think much of it at the time.

Two days later, on Dec. 26, 2004, the tsunami struck Southeast Asia, killing thousands of people. Fr. Cipriano was shocked when he heard the news, and he remembered the girl who had come to his church. He realized that she had known that she was going to die, and that she had come to him to make her confession because she wanted to be ready. Fr. Cipriano was amazed by the girl's faith and her courage. He said that she was a true example of a Christian, and that she had shown us how to live our lives with faith and hope.

Fr. Cipriano's story is a reminder that we should always be ready to meet our maker, and that we should live our lives with faith and hope. He said that we should not be afraid of death, but we should embrace it as a part of life. He said that we should live our lives in such a way that we are always ready to meet our maker, and that we should not be afraid of death, but we should embrace it as a part of life.

Saved

I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES. NO, IT IS NOT THE KIND THAT HEALINGS, rescues a whole down and sits atop my shoulder as it can unhappen in my ear. I believe in angels—but not as seen by the eyes and that come into our lives to support our lives.

Angels come unannounced. You do not explicitly ask for them, neither do they come searching for you. Perhaps in moments of extreme sadness or confusion, your heart gives out a cry which draws them to you. They tell you things you need to hear or give you comfort when you are down. They ask for nothing in return but the love your dreaming lady a friend you have ever seen for a long time, a new student or your favorite customer or the driver of the taxi taking you to the airport. An angel can be anybody.

YOUNG BLOOD

JMD

Be sweet to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We invite contributions from the twenty-to-some-thing set.—Ed.

In my case, because was Tommy. He used in ways in the daytime. I am sure I'm not the only one in Barcelona, Spain, or even in the history of humankind who had that idea, but I'm sure that because he was coming and was inspired to see a new person in the house. I did not mind, but I felt sorry he had to stay in the living room, using the cross mattress for "guests" as his bed.

By the time he arrived, I had been in Barcelona for almost six months. I was managing from being "just okay" to being reasonably homesick. I had not anticipated feeling that way. After all, I had been living away from home since I was nine years old, so what else was new? But I was almost always sad and I had the feeling that I should be anywhere but here. At times I cried, but I would never tell my parents how sad I could get in this foreign land.

Despite kept telling me that my homesickness would pass and that I would be all right. Although I knew it was true, I felt that something else was bothering me. I was feeling lonely, strange. I was missing my family and friends. I was missing the food, and I was missing the sense of belonging to my school. I missed a lot of the things I took for granted in Manila.

Here I was facing the possibility of school and shunning the path I would like to follow. I was pursuing marriage just used to be case method, and I was preparing my curriculum vitae for summer internship. I was focused on what I think about my future when I would soon have to make, but did not overcome. I was afraid of.

My heart asked for home and I knew that I wanted to go back. I knew that I was one empty homesick. I knew that I longed for the place which means my heart and the people who have been there for me all my life and who have been there for me and I should stay. Besides, a lot of people would consider me crazy if I passed up the opportunity to earn a lot of money by staying in Europe and I was advised that time might be right.

Tommy thought otherwise. He said that what he was seeing in Barcelona was a lot of young people who have opportunities a way for people who had the chance to study abroad to go back to their countries. He told me the story of a Nepali village that united up money for over 20 years so they could send their brightest student to medical school in London. He was to come back and share what he learned in the village, not be more for it.

Tommy also told me about another girl from our school who was thinking of staying in Europe to work. She was intelligent, charismatic and would make a great leader in her own country. She encouraged her to go back and she did.

Tommy made me realize that I can and should go back because in my country, you make a difference. He made me realize that it is okay to be idealistic and wish to be an agent of change in a country mired in hopelessness. He encouraged me to view this phase in my life as a chance to develop myself and, perhaps, become a better doctor than when I arrived in Barcelona. That would prepare me for the things I have to face two years from today.

I have no messianic complex and I certainly do not think that when I want to do with my life is given. I am simply being selfish in wishing to be where I will be most happy and useful. Nothing is wrong with that. I know that I will never be happy pursuing for being how and to remember it. With this knowledge, I could achieve anything and sacrifice everything.

I was saved. Saved by the knowledge that I can choose what I want to do, even if it does not make sense, because it will make me happy.

Tommy made sure not to continue with his job hunting, but I am keeping his poster of an Ethiopian girl as souvenir. He recently finish a hotel business office degree and before people came to him the place. It is a special poster from a special person. I do not know if I will meet him again, as I want to remember the man and the moment when he helped someone most, an angel showed up to rescue me from despair.

Bill, 20, is studying at the IESE Business School (University of Navarra) in Barcelona, Spain.

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Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph, together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you hold and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

Whose party was it anyway?

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

EVEN AS MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO Cardinal Rosales and CBCP president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo were calling for "character change" among Filipinos instead of Charter change, opposition lawmakers were already lining up behind the Liberal Party standard-bearer Loren Legarda for reelection next year.

Legarda, who was also called in the flock by his direct and none-of-his-self-serving hand-holding the opposite material, the senator was elsewhere denounce the "dirty-talk" that had been played recently between the public and perhaps worse—a "character change" among politicians. Former Loren Legarda Sunday "Obviously the call for character change is not going to affect those people at all," the senator said, referring to the issues and ill-mannered "blast type" tactic.

So what Malacañang spokesperson said President Arroyo herself would lead the prelates' call and conduct an examination of conscience to see how she might need to change her "character," some sectors of the public could be forgiven for responding to the move with raised eyebrows. If the voice matters in her intentions, she already knows what she needs to do: tell the truth about the conduct of the 2004 elections—and she would not have to look far for that.

* * *

But to calling for a different kind of "character" among the populace, I'm afraid the Catholic bishops have managed to dissipate the collective anger roused by the congressional leadership's maneuvering to change the Constitution. It's not only both the House and the executive have backed down and rescinded their feeble attempts at forcing their way through legal blockades. Still, the evil lobbyists, the alleged payoffs and the deliberate attempts to subvert the will of the people deserved a passionate response, not the subdued, half-hearted protest that took place at the Luneta.

* * *

BY MOST accounts, the turnout at the Luneta was disappointing, a far cry from the promised half-a-million crowd that organizers said they were expecting to attend.

Perhaps the lords of the flock—priests, bishops, lay and religious—had something to do with the tepid response: When bishops tell us that "character change" is what the country needs, they are deflecting our focus from who should have been the real targets of public anger: the administration congressperson and their political patrons.

When the bishops call us all the faithful to change their ways, they are stating the country's deteriorating political situation is everybody's fault—and therefore, nobody's.

But we can do, I refuse to share responsibility for that mess with the elected officials in the dock of guilt. Instead, Senator Fernandez have invested for an examination of conscience, except perhaps as reason for allowing the wrong people to sit in the House. But the real fault for opposition to the dictators and their cronies lies with those who plotted against the national interest and rode roughshod over public sensibilities.

The organizers had also wanted to transform the rally from a protest to a "thanksgiving" for the failure of the impeachment bid that the President finally won the fight? They only did so because their symbols were forcibly ripped apart. Thanks but no thanks—the time for a mass rally has long passed, and today is not the time for gracious, self-satisfied agreements.

* * *

I REALLY don't know what happened between the lines angry reunion issued by Sen. Mike Arroyo of Ti-Thailand and Rep. Mike Defensor of the Iglesia Ni Cristo, and the staging of that rally last Sunday in Luneta.

True, Archbishop Lagdameo had been unusually swift in his denunciation of the Cha-cha, questioning whether it had been truly "for the common good." But was this enough justification for the CBCP to hijack what had been planned as a misdirected, multi-faith demonstration and turn it into an exercise in pious futility?

Planet is a rather unpleasant of the organizers to decree that no politicians and non-bishops, including non-Catholic leaders, would be allowed onstage? And the no "political" banners to be displayed at the venue itself?

I mean, who would've that rally anyway? It's like a basketball hanging into party preparations and then disbanding that the guest list be extended, then the dress be not down, and then the guest of honor be excluded. Phone party was cancelled?

* * *

ONCE again, the institutional Church in this country could stand a moment to cure the rate of history and—dare I say it?—humility.

Commenting on the turnout at the Luneta, a friend quoted from Malcolm Gladwell's "Blink," where the author decided that when you make a snap decision, based on your experiences, your knowledge and your intuition, the more information you have the more it's likely that you'll make the wrong decision. It's when you start relying to explain yourself that you get bogged down in specifications and motivations. That's when you run into problems.

Perhaps, stunned by the wave of public indignation that they managed to contribute they reacted with all the righteous courage of biblical prophets, the Philippine bishops forgot to look inside the basket. Instead of examining their own failing their lust on the path of activism, they began to scrutinize for valid ground by mounting the unsuspecting.

But the bishops—and the pro-Gloria politicians—will soon find out that the interesting resonances that fueled over the other week are still around and gathering steam, and will find expression one way or the other. Whether there is mobilization through the ballot or through extra-parliamentary rights change, the guardians of the status quo should realize that you haven't popular will in your park and to intimidate by threat or guile to get the vote to attempt anger that demands to be addressed.

Cultivating energy

WORLD VIEW

Jean-Michel Severino

FROM CLIMATE CHANGE TO VOLATILE OIL prices, all signs point to a looming global energy crisis. Confronting the growing challenge means finding solutions to the dangers while at the same time harnessing the massive boost to the organic potential that the new priorities each day through phenomenons. Solar energy enables plants to absorb carbon gas and thereby produce not only oxygen, but also the fuel that the second kingdom uses for heat—and that our machines can use for energy.

Since the Neolithic Age, then Stone Age period, humans have been a subtraction life "finding" to eat or to feed herd. Yet, even in today's world, income poverty is ignored. Beginning with the industrial revolution, human usage energy from coal, and later from oil and natural gas, for the most, in the subtraction of non-renewable resources.

Existing alternatives for diversifying energy production are limited. Nuclear energy presents a conflict of disadvantages, owing to concerns about safety and disposal of radioactive waste. Hydroelectric power is already widely used, while wind and solar energy are economically sporadic and dispersed by available.

Biomass, on the other hand, has several advantages. Supplies of it are large and available throughout the world. Moreover, the technology necessary to convert it into energy—including high-yield farming, gas conversion, and hydrolysis from cellulose fuel—has long been mastered. Widely used during World War II, this technology has since advanced considerably.

Biomass-energy, however, is the victim of unfair competition from fossil fuels. Oil's price reflects its use values, including real disinflation costs, but not that of creating the ozone one necessary to protect. Millions of years and 100 tons of plant matter are necessary to produce one liter of oil, whereas just 15 kilograms of plant matter are required to make one liter of synthetic fuel.

After the oil gas, with oil below $20 a barrel, investors in developing energy from biomass offered, at most, a 5% return. Yet, from the standpoint of the public, it is fundamental science. Yet the potential is immense. For planet's biomass—forests, grasslands, savannas, and crops—make up productive capital that generates a 3% percent "income" every year. Like a bountiful fruit tree, harvested in most managed by the sun, this supply is renewable indefinitely, as long as it is managed properly. The annual return on this capital is currently estimated at 80 billion tons, yet only two billion tons is consumed for food purposes and 10 billion tons for energy.

Increasing the responsible use of this energy source would contribute to the fight against climate change by reducing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and diminishing the amount of fossil fuel that must be extracted. Moreover, it would help to reduce poverty in southern countries' promises to facilitate their economic development. Considered the "tragedy of the poor" until today, biomass could become a source of wealth if it is grown and harnessed with the support of the world's richest countries.

Thus, "energy crops" could be developed in poor countries' fallow lands, using traditional and agro-industrial activities would be enhanced and

Jean-Michel Severino, a former vice president of the World Bank, is the all-water general of the Agence Française de Développement (jmsev@afd.fr).

THEY SAID

Character change

"The novel issues responsibility and more urgently this crisis-ridden and moral character change. Call it repentance from sin, reform of morals, renewal of values. All of these, and the universal cry with hope, right vision and confidence."

—Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines president, during the Church-led prayer rally at Rizal Park

Letting terrorism win

"The sole crisis this year also shows that current Arroyo habits are not as strong as their predecessors' indeed, by inching down this year, Senate has shown that it still has in us to resistance, it is more because one of Arroyo's principal is not cooperation among its 10 leaders-eight members."

—Tony C. Regala, columnist of Thailand's daily "The Nation," on the postponement of the 10th Senate summit in Cebu

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Women empowerment stands for truth, decency

AN EMPOWERED WOMAN IS WORthy of emulation. I admire women who can speak their minds bravely, whenever the cause in their self-interest or safety.

Women empowerment manifests in the courage to stand up for truth and decency in the face of powerful evil forces. It is the kind of courage exhibited by the eloquent orators of the opposition as they heaped their hearts, minds and voices with those of their male counterparts in opposing the tyranny of the majority that showed no shame in violating no less than our Constitution.

Women empowerment consists in speaking with a clear mind, convincing logic, forceful truth and pure heart. Empowerment arises in enlighten, educate, lead and inspire. Empowerment breathes in the cries that have lost hope, like Hanahanon Ilanggit performs her legislative duties and carries herself both in the halls of Congress and in the parliament of the streets. (I wish the country has more lady counterparts in Bayan Alkan Ortiz Corpuzan and Chit Estrella.)

Women empowerment does not show in the lame "I am sorry" classic impenitential speech of a woman president, or in the "I spit at the Chief Justice" vituperation of a women senator. These two privileged members of the women species have enough power to carry them around. My Christmas wish for the country is that they exercise their woman and human power in a manner that inspire Filipinos, not plunge the nation deeper in confusion of despair.

—MA. GRACIA DE LOS REYES-PLAZO,
63 Earthquake Ave. Ext.,
Loyola Grand Villas,
Quezon City

Japanese aid linked to human rights

REGARDING YOUR ARTICLE TITLED "NO direct link between aid and human rights—Japanese envoy" (PDI, 12/9/06), I wish to clarify the position of the Japanese government on the issue of human rights and Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Japan has been monitoring the human rights situation in the Philippines very closely. Japan's keen interest on the Philippines' human rights situation has been communicated to the Philippine government during various occasions, including the Japan-Philippines summit meeting held last Dec. 9 between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Japan-Philippines Joint Statement, which was signed by the two leaders after their summit meeting, states that "the two leaders emphasized the importance of sustaining harmony upholding democratic values and preserving human rights, as well as preserving the environment and social well being with respect to general governance and to the implementation of the official development assistance."

Japan's ODA assistance is guided by its ODA Charter. The ODA Charter stipulates that human rights situation will be taken into consideration together with various other elements, such as trends in military expenditure, development of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, environment, democratization, etc., in making a comprehensive decision for the provision of ODA. In considering future ODA to the Philippines, the Japanese government will continue to be guided by its ODA Charter.

—YOSHIKAZU EBE,
(Deputy) minister/secretary
for public relations,
Government of Japan

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LETTERS

Sy denies going into power project with Aussie partners

THIS IS WITH REFERENCE TO THE REC-1 column of Victor Aquino, specifically, that portion in "Heard through the grapevine" where he wrote that I am going into power generation (a 150-megawatt geothermal plant in Pasil, Kalinga-Apayao) in partnership with an Australian group.

With due respect, I would like to categorically state that, at present, neither I nor any member of my family has any interest or business venture related to power generation.

Likewise, I would like to specifically say that I have not entered into any partnership agreement with an Australian group regarding a certain 150-MW geothermal plant in Pasil, Kalinga-Apayao.

—HENRY SY JR., chair,
SM Investments Corporation,
10 Central Boulevard Path,
Bay City, Pasay City

The last bargaining chips of Filipinos

GEORGE BUSHOOD IRAW ONCE SOIL "democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few." Is this what has happened to us? It's bad enough when thousands upon thousands of skilled medical personnel have to seek employment outside of the Philippines because of economic needs.

In the same manner, it is sad to see that the country seems to be unable to recover from calamities that have occurred or to combat crime like almost unfailing regularity. One can say, though that these two problems have even that may be beyond the immediate control of those in government today.

But when those in Congress try to push Charter change through glaringly evident manipulations, they themselves are destroying the republic's credibility. Sadly, all this is happening at a time when human resource and good faith are the last remaining bargaining chips of Filipinos.

—GUMELEO B. DELFINO JR.,
leo_bdelfino@yahoo.com

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia explains the House decision to drop the proposal to convene a constituent assembly at a press conference in Makati.

Resignation is the only honorable option

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA SHOULD show everybody that he is really sincere in his desire to serve the Filipino people. From the very start, he made it appear that he was willing to leave heaven and earth to push through with the unwieldy Cha-cha assembly because, he was telling everybody, we needed to immediately change the Constitution to attain the development we wanted.

His announcement that he and his pro-Con-ass allies have decided to archive Con-ass clearly indicated that all along their primary concern was to prevent their political extinction. If they really believed that what they were doing was right and would serve the best interest of the Filipino people, they should have stood their ground. They should have refused to yield to external pressure, never mind that it was widespread and popular. They should have insisted on what they believed in, even if they had to make a political sacrifice by resigning. If only to show they were sincere and had no other interest but to serve our people. I'm sure they would have gained the priceless admiration and respect of our people.

But they stepped back—to save their hide. In other countries where dignity and honor are given premium, such a shameful and embarrassing act would, just the same, be a cause for resignation. If the congressmen have any dignity and self-respect left to them, they should resign.

—REGL ALMONEDA,
rsalma@lpuss.com

Across the NATION

US war veterans' kids seek recognition

By Vec S. Lubro
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN Rights regional office here recently endorsed to the US ambassador a petition of a group asking that they be recognized by the US government as abandoned children of American soldiers during World War II.

The members of the World War II Loyalty Guild, standing Commission Organization, said they were excluded from the benefits of US Public Law 97-359, otherwise known as the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1990.

This law gave due recognition to collapsing of US servicemen in Thailand, Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, who were allowed to immigrate to the United States and were placed in the care of financially responsible American families.

"Recognizing their basic human rights to their descent lives and to have full identities, we are bringing this matter through your attention for appropriate action," CHR regional director Paquito Nacino said in his endorsement of the petition of the group to US ambassador to us to Manila.

The group said in their petition that they were "once again craving (for) the attention of the United States Government to kindly fulfill its moral and social obligations to us being sons and daughters of American soldiers during WWII."

They claimed that all through their lives they had "suffered difficulties like starvation and lack of education considering the sad plight and subhuman unfortunate (sic) we pass mothers after the war."

But Allen Pesayo, the 66-year-old president of the group, said the group does not blame anybody, especially their fathers, for their predicament.

What they want, he added, was recognition as sons and daughters of soldiers who were their citizens and under the service of the United States.

"Our fathers would not have come here and met our mothers if not sent by the US government," he said.

He admitted, though, that when he was still young the GI grants-in-aid helped them in their studies "through the Philippine-American Friendship Association, whose programs were implemented by the Philippine National Red Cross."

According to Pesayo they received an educational support of P5 every month while still in elementary and P15 a month when they reached high school.

This was in the 1950s and the 1960s.

This support, however, was stopped for unknown reasons sometime in the early 1960s when Pesayo was already in second year high school.

"What we received was only a small benefit," he said.

TRIBAL CAROL A group of male members of the Mangyang Tribe roams Davao City to raise money by caroling. The group was also seen collecting used clothes from residents governor enough to donate goods to the Ofwcenter.

Solon expresses no remorse over his support for Con-ass

By Alan Pal
Inquirer Visayas

ROMANCETE CITY ...Unlike his counterpart from Cebu City, Negros Oriental second district Rep. Emilio Macias II expressed no remorse over his support for the move to convene the House of Representatives into a constituent assembly to change the Constitution.

"I have nothing to be ashamed of," Macias said in a telephone interview.

He said he supported the proposal because he believed that there was a need for change.

Last week, Cebu City south district Rep. Antonio Cuenco apologized to his constituents for supporting the move to revise the Constitution through a constituent assembly.

Cuenco said he merely went with the House majority in passing the resolution to convene a constituent assembly with or without the Senate. "No matter how we argue, the House made a mistake at that time," he said.

The decision to convene a constituent assembly sparked nationwide protests from students, activist groups led by Church-based groups like the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines and the El Shaddai, forcing the lawmakers to drop the resolution in favor of a constituent convention.

But Macias said the action of the House was justifiable. "We should have faced the music because we could explain it. We were not wrong but it looked like the House leadership [backed] out."

Macias is a member of the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco who is aligned with the House majority. He, along with Representatives Jacinto Paras and Herminio Teves of the 1st and 3rd districts of Negros Oriental, voted for the constituent assembly proposal.

"I was convinced to vote for the Con-ass because there is a need for a change (in). There are three modes of changing the Constitution. One is through a people's initiative but I never believed in that. Another is through a constitutional convention which is too widely expensive and time consuming," he said.

According to Macias, the constituent assembly is the fastest, most convenient and direct way of changing the Constitution to remove provisions that proponents said are blocking the country's path to progress.

If the House will wait for the Senate to amend the Constitution, both chambers of Congress would never come to an agreement, he added.

"There is a need for a concerned legislature. If the legislature and executive are working together, progress is forthcoming," Macias said.

A WOMAN holds her candle as she joined thousands of protesters during a Roman Catholic Church-led prayer rally against a plan by pro-administration lawmakers to change the Constitution at the Rizal Park on Sunday, Dec. 17, 2006.

MACIAS

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New realty tax rates in Batangas junked in CA

Mt. Province pols feud over ₱100M

BAGUIO CITY—THE TOP TWO politicians of Mt. Province are feuding over the use of a ₱100 million fund for the installation of guardrails along and widening of the Halsema Highway from Mt. Data in Bauko town to the capital Bontoc.

The fund is part of the ₱6-billion rehabilitation of Halsema Highway from Mt. Province to Ifugao.

Gov. Maximo Dalog wants President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is expected to inaugurate the project on Dec. 27, that the fund should be used instead for the concreting of some sections of the road instead of using it for the guardrails and widening.

"Madam President, we humbly and respectfully appeal to your good office to please direct the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways) to ensure the reprogramming of the funds to concreting works," Dalog said in a letter last month.

"This manner of implementation is perceived to be beneficial for a few who are motivated by profit and not for the community and riding public," he said.

Mt. Province Rep. Victor Dominguez pushed the original program of work.

Contractor Harry Dominguez, former mayor of Tadian town and Dominguez's nephew, wrote Mr. Arroyo on Dec. 11 to ask her to push Dalog's request.

"[Dalog] insists that concreting of the national road must be the priority of DPWH, for best engineered could the governor be, and no intermediate, to disregard the technical expertise of the DPWH people and the optimal roads specifications and standards in compliance to (sic) Your Excellency's directives for appropriate widening before concrete paving," Harry Dominguez said.

"I believe you are aware of the terrain, curves and slopes affecting the narrow portions of Halsema Highway specifically the Mt. Province-Ifugao section. Concrete paving of the road cannot be pursued without first complying with the required minimum width for a safe two-way traffic," Dominguez said in reports he's last week.

Phases II and III of the Halsema rehabilitation project traverse Cervantes to Bontoc, and Bontoc to Banaue, Ifugao, are part of the DPWH's national road improvement program funded by a World Bank loan. The project mainly for implementation early 2007.

The first phase of the rehabilitation, which covers the Benguet side, has been completed and costs about ₱1.2 billion.

In her State of the Nation Address last year, Ms. Arroyo said the rehabilitation of Halsema was a presidential concern.

"My father [the late President Ferdinand Marcos] built the Halsema Highway from Baguio to Bontoc and the Bagabag airport in Nueva Vizcaya to access the Ifugao rice terraces ... We have rehabilitated the Ifugao to Mt. Data leg of the highway and the one of Halsema will soon follow," she said. Frank Cimatu, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Cholera makes presence felt in Camarines

MINALABAC, CAMARINES SUR—Three cases of cholera have been confirmed by health authorities here amid an outbreak of diarrhea that claimed at least 70 persons in Barangay Iyanomo and this town.

Dr. Hazel Florendo, municipal health officer, revealed on Monday the confirmation of the three cases of cholera that, she said, were the result of the culture of fecal swab in the laboratory of the Bicol Medical Center (BMC).

Florendo said on Tuesday that there they awaited more results of made by the Camarines Sur provincial health team that went to the area in response to reports of rising cases of diarrhea in Iyanomoan.

She said only six fecal swabs were collected from the different persons with symptoms of cholera, which include discharges of watery feces and the like.

Florendo added that a person is linked with cholera also suffers from fever, vomiting and abdominal pains.

She said cholera kills by weakening a person's circulation because of excessive dehydration beyond the tolerable level caused by watery bowel movement.

She added that a person moaning once is bound 10 times a day is in danger of dying from dehydration.

Florendo said the first reported victim died in the BMC the day before yesterday. Jason Escandor Jr., *Inquirer Southern Luzon*

IN THE DARK
Protesters in Davao City light candles during Sunday's prayer rally, calling for the scrapping of President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for Charter change.

Gov't urged to declare birthday of Ilonggo patriot nat'l holiday

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—HISTORIANS ARE CALLING FOR the declaration of Dec. 10 as a national holiday in honor of Ilonggo patriot Dr. Graciano Lopez Jaena.

Ladyselen Baldoz, executive director of the National Historical Institute, said the institute would recommend to President Macapagal-Arroyo the declaration of the birthday of Lopez Jaena as a holiday in the whole country, not just in Iloilo.

Bailey said lawmakers, especially those from Negros Island, should also pass a law declaring the same as a holiday.

Lopez Jaena was honored yesterday in two ceremonies marking his 150th birthanniversary.

Historians, local officials, students, teachers and government employees attended the ceremony held at the Graciano Lopez Jaena Park formerly the Iloilo Plaza, the grand opera house where Lopez Jaena expressed super-heroic talents.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor, who represented the President, led the wreath-laying ceremony along with government officials and representatives of the NHI, Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) and Liberal Club, called Dr. Graciano Lopez Jaena Foundation Inc.

Historians have pointed out that Lopez Jaena, a distinguished orator and journalist, deserves the same recognition as Jose Rizal and Marcelo del Pilar as one of the "great triumvirate of the Propaganda Movement," against Spanish colonial rule.

Lopez Jaena founded the fortnightly newspaper La Solidaridad, the publication of the Propaganda Movement, and was well known for his writings espousing freedom from Spanish rule.

At the age of 28, he published his first satirical work "Fray Botod" (Big Bellied Friar), which depicted the abuses and ostentatious greediness of the Spanish friars.

He was once distinguished as an orator and dubbed the "Demosthenes of the Philippines." Spanish authorities feared him most for his speeches, which roused his audience and contributed to the cause of freedom.

His firmness in principle and nobility of ideals live up to this day.

Regino Penaloa chief of the Rizal Memorial Museum division, said Lopez Jaena is a good model for the Filipino youth on the importance of standing up for the rights and of being a critical observer of what is going on in the country.

Penaloa noted that Lopez Jaena's statistical powers and articles advocated some political reforms in the country during Spanish colonial rule.

He said it is important to broaden the historical awareness of the people especially the youth.

"History offers lessons for everybody but it seems we are doing it again like how good and corruption is continuing," he said.

Mayor Jerry Treñas said Lopez Jaena's hometown is relevant to the current times.

RICHEST MAN'S HELP
Taipan Lucio Tan (center) and wife Carmen (left) hand over blankets to poor residents of Dengo, Albay when they were overwhelmed by angry people during the distribution of relief goods under the auspices of the Tan Chi Foundation, the relief mission distributed rice, ghadi mats, mosquito nets, detergents, slippers, kitchen utensils, cookware and pails, while a 27-man medical team provided free medical services and medicines to affected residents. The Tan couple is among the major benefactors and volunteers of Tan Chi Foundation, a Taiwan-based international relief and humanitarian organization with presence in 40 countries.

Breach of Ilocos hospital rules shakes board

ONE OF the drawings of children of their recollection of Supertyphoon Reming's wrath in their communities. This and other drawings were made by children in evacuation centers around Albay where victims of Reming took shelter after losing homes and pieces of property to mudflows and floods. The process of rehabilitation is slow and the children have yet to return to their normal lives before the typhoon struck and destroyed homes and schools.

Albay gets water purifying machine

LEGAZPI CITY—ELEAN BRIDES

This could be the typhoon gift Albay could get as the Spanish government donated a P6.6-million water purifying machine to the province on the eve Sunday's 1,000 liters of purified water per hour and was set up in Daraohanon town.

It was brought by a Hercules cargo plane at the Legazpi City airport.

Ms. Eugenia Martin-Sanz, director, head of the Spanish Agency for International Development's (Aeci) relief department, led a nine-man Spanish team of relief and medical workers helping victims of Reming in the province cope with diseases and lack of potable water.

Martinez said her group might build a new hospital in Ligao City in place of the disaster hospital in the area which was destroyed by Reming.

Sec has already poured in some P66 million in aid to Albay.

Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzalez, a Spanish mestizo, expressed gratitude to Sole on behalf of the province.

"The Spanish government's sincere show of concern ... through its government response ... is a strong manifestation of a deep rooted bondage between the Spaniards and the Filipinos," said the governor. Ephraim Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon

By Cristina Arzadon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LAOAG CITY—THE PROVINCIAL board sought to correct lapses in the admission of patients in government hospitals after it established a breach in procedures last month when Mayor Michael Farifias was allegedly late in summoning of a self-inflicted injury.

The board's committee on laws headed Ilocos Norte Farifias' on Thursday at the Gov. Roque Ablan Jr. Memorial Provincial Hospital on Nov. 2, citing findings of a hospital committee. Chief registered nurse disregarded when the mayor's private doctor took him there for treatment.

Farifias accidentally shot himself and lost two toes when he slipped on his baby Armalite rifle while he was boarding his van.

In a report on Res. 20, the hospital committee found that Farifias' doctor, Francis Dacuycuy, "committed exemplary disregard of hospital rules and bypassed hospital personnel on duty when [he took] the mayor [to the hospital]," through the backdoor and performed emergency operation on him."

The lone member committee also took note of the following:

• After Farifias' operation, Dacuycuy refused to have his patient taken to the post-anesthesia care unit (Pacu) and instead took him immediately to his room at home.

• The doctor filled up clinical forms without the knowledge of the emergency room personnel and the admitting nurse.

• He told the ward nurse not to inform senior nurses and warned not to allow the unauthorized women to visit the mayor.

"[Dr. Dacuycuy] put [the mayor] there at risk by not informing him to the emergency room [because] his patient was bleeding for an undetermined injury," the report said.

"[Disobeying the physician] goes more harm than good to his patient by disregarding the ABCs [airway, breathing, circulation] of life," it added.

Dacuycuy did not show up during the committee's hearing on Res. 20.

But in an earlier letter to Dr. Roger Bautista, chief of the provincial hospital, Dacuycuy said he was taking full responsibility for the actions taken during the time that Farifias was admitted.

Dacuycuy said Farifias asked him that his condition be kept from the public to minimize attention.

"Extraordinary situations demand extraordinary effort especially when the highest official of the city is at risk. I acted in the best manner I could to protect the interest of my patient," Dacuycuy said.

Bautista said he would leave the matter to the provincial government to decide on what actions and sanctions to be adopted.

Board Member Victorino Lazo said the board wanted to ensure that hospital regulations should apply to all patients regardless of relation to life.

Board Member De Vitor Crisostomo said the committee would recommend that hospitals should institutionalize the issuance of medical bulletins when patients admitted are public officials.

"We must adopt the system of issuing medical bulletins so that the public will know the health condition of public officials, more so when they are occupying high positions in government," he said.

Execs study ban on vessels not seaworthy in Davao Gulf

DAVAO CITY—OFficials here are studying a proposal to ban poorly maintained vessels from entering the Davao Gulf to prevent a repeat of oil spills that could endanger the habitat of one of the most diverse marine flora in Asia.

Councilor Leonardo Avila, chair of the Davao Gulf Management Council (DGMC), said the Davao Gulf Council would strengthen the capability of law enforcers to ensure that only vessels in top conditions are allowed entry into the Davao Gulf to prevent an oil spill like that of Petron's tanker near Guimaras.

A DGMD divers into the concrete fishing pot of Talikud Island in the Island Garden City of Samal in Davao del Norte, the area facing the Davao Gulf where divers a large survey of marine life that officials are seeking to protect with a ban on dilapidated vessels to prevent the occurrence of oil spills.

Fishing ground

The gulf, bounded by four provinces, 16 towns and five cities, has been a major fishing ground for close to 20,000 commercial fishermen.

While it is also home to 30 species of whales, marine turtles, whale sharks and other forms of marine life, as host to a major source of income and local resorts make it vulnerable to oil spills.

"How can we prevent these things from happening?" asked Mayor Rogelio Amlado of the Island Garden City of Samal.

"One we cannot find these ships coming here are seaworthy to prevent accidents from happening," said Amlado, who also sits in the DGMC.

Ban reason

Avila said local officials in areas surrounding the gulf should ban vessels that are not seaworthy from entering the gulf.

The shipping company responsible for the oil spill in Guimaras was earlier found to have engineless barges.

The DGMC is coordinating with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Philippines and the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank Corporation (HSBC) in coming up with an Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI) that would identify which parts of the Davao Gulf are environmentally vulnerable.

> "... Our country has been full of accidents' just waiting to happen ...

Protection

"The ESI mapping is just the beginning of the protection of the gulf," said WWF Philippines president Jose Lorenzo Tan.

Margie Moran-Floirendo, DGMC secretary general, said the ESI would provide a data base to serve as a basis for decision making and actions by local officials. Inquirer Mindanao Lucrecio, Inquirer Mindanao

NEWS

RP needs P50B for typhoon rehab

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE COUNTRY WOULD NEED AT LEAST P50 billion, or $1.01 billion, to rehabilitate communities, rebuild infrastructure and replace crops destroyed by the last four typhoons that struck the country, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Esperanza Cabral said yesterday.

Speaking after the launch of "Philippines 2006 Typhoon Appeal" at the Sarmadamus Hotel in Quezon City, Cabral said the amount needed for rehabilitation much could actually be higher since the $1.01 billion figure quoted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), only represented the actual damage.

She said Dilkusta Noble, UN resident coordinator for the Philippines, had based the $1.01 billion from consolidated figures submitted by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC).

Cabral said the fund-raising was for the rehabilitation of areas hit by typhoons "Peping," "Milenyo," "Reming" and "Seniang."

She said at least $46 million (P2.2 billion) was needed for the rehabilitation and replacement of crops for the last typhoon alone.

"It became clear that afternoon after the launch that we needed to accelerate our efforts," Cabral said. "We should have a clearing house of all the resources that are being brought in (so) we don't duplicate, including money, goods, personnel and equipment."

At least 1,050 people were dead or are missing.

"We're short of funds and what even measures we had to cope with disasters had been depleted by four successive strong typhoons during the last three months," she said.

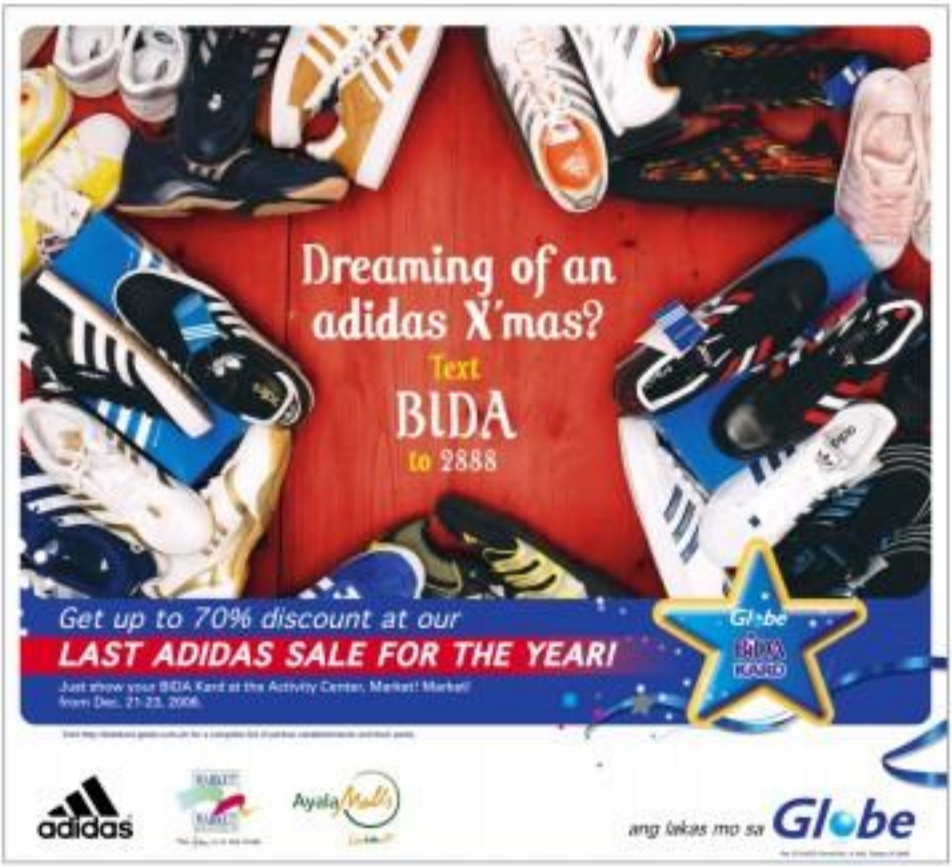
Around 320,000 people are still in evacuation centers in Albay after their homes were destroyed.

Meanwhile, the International Organization for Migration donated $250,000 (P12.4 million) in immediate aid for victims of typhoon Reming in the Bicol region and announced plans to outlay $6 million (P299 million) more to provide relief for 95,000 internally displaced people in the region.

IOM's Manila office yesterday said it had set up a hub in Legaspi City for the delivery of emergency shelter and non-food items to an estimated 8,000 families in the hardest hit provinces.

Also yesterday, the Department of Foreign Affairs said the Gusi-based Ayala Foundation donated a total of 20 pallets of non-perishable relief goods for Reming victims, to be shipped free-of-charge to Manila and weekend courtesy of Cebu Pacific Air. With Visit Gutierrez and Reuters

FIGHT. Gusto, 3, takes shelter under a half-buried tricycle in Barangay Padang, Legaspi City while her parents look for food. Bicol was hit, it, died at the height of typhoon "Reming." (AFP/Ted Aljibe)



Aplus METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil
Tell us your feedback: inquirer.net/name/aplus/message to 2200 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) E-mail: p_metro@inquirer.com.ph

Court stops Binay suspension order

Merits of case must be heard first to check complaint's validity

By Armando N. Nocum

MAKATI MAYOR JEJOMAR BINAY HAS WON round two in his fight against Malacañang.

The Court of Appeals has granted the mayor's petition for preliminary injunction, effectively barring the Palace from ordering his suspension order against him, his vice mayor and 15 city councilors until the court has determined the validity of the administrative complaint filed against them.

In a 40-page resolution issued by Associate Justice Bienvenido Lucas on Dec. 13, the CA's 15th Division also dismissed the motion of respondents Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno seeking the lifting of the temporary restraining order (TRO) the court had earlier issued in favor of Binay and his co-respondents.

The court also stopped Ermita and Puno from proceeding with the investigation of the administrative complaint filed by Rolando Bellaflor, Binay's political rival, which was the basis for the 60-day preventive suspension order issued by Malacañang on Oct. 17.

In his complaint, Bellaflor had alleged that Binay and his councilors were liable for "grave misconduct, abuse of authority and for conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service" for conspiring to defraud the Makati City government by putting about 1,000 ghost employees on the payroll.

After the suspension order was served, Binay had promptly barricaded himself

JOSEPH ALO

HOLIDAY SPIRIT Urban poor children wearing Santa hats seem to be enjoying themselves as they joined the annual celebration of Pamaskuhan,—a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for a room as she was—at the Manila Cathedral yesterday.

BOY SANTOS

SCENE of the Crime Operations examine the spot where a pillbox exploded yesterday in front of the Pasig public market.

JOEY MENDIOLA

Traders warned vs fake checks gang

By Nancy C. Carvajal

POLICE YESTERDAY WARNED BANKS, commercial establishments and private lenders against a syndicate trying to cash fake checks supposedly issued by the Philippine National Police.

Chief Supt. Pedro Tango, Southern Police District director, told police officials in the cities of Caloocan, Malabon and Valenzuela, and Navotas town that he had received complaints from several businessmen who were victimized by the group.

According to Tango, the fake checks were issued in the name of policemen who were not even on the PNP roster.

"Anyone who tries to make a transaction using these spurious checks must be arrested immediately," the PNP official said.

Tango added that to avoid suspicion, members of the syndicate dress up like policemen and present authentic-looking documents like a special power of attorney supposedly issued by the police, along with a photocopy of his PNP identification card.

Most of the victims were owners of grocery stores and money lenders, he said.

The NPD official advised businessmen to swiftly flee the snatchers of a PNP check by calling the PNP Rumor Office.

No pardon for this erring cab driver

By DJ Yap

A DRIVER WHO DOZE IN A FORGIVING mood after a car he was driving was sideswiped by a passing taxicab on the Quezon City Hall late last month.

Fr. Jerry Manlangit has pressed charges against cab driver Wilson Hernandez for causing at least P6,000 worth of damage to his Mitsubishi Lancer in a traffic accident on Nov. 29 at the city hall compound.

In a complaint filed on Dec. 8 in the Quezon City prosecutor's office, Manlangit accused Hernandez, 44, of reckless imprudence resulting in damage to property.

Based on the priest's account, he was maneuvering the car into a parking space, assisted by attendant Alfredo Molina, when the accident occurred at 9 a.m.

The right portion of Hernandez's Toyota Corolla van bumped into the front left corner of the Lancer, as the former was cruising on the lane toward Gate 7, Manlangit said.

In a sworn statement, police have administered by SPO1 Jefferson Dejay of the Special Traffic Action Group at City Hall, Manlangit said the damage to the vehicle amounted to P6,000.

When asked if he intends to press charges, he wrote: "Yes, and I want the driver of van to pay for damage."

Hernandez, on the other hand, said he wanted to settle the matter out of court.

5 hurt in Pasig mart explosion

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FIVE PERSONS, INCLUDING an eight-year-old boy, were injured when an explosive concealed during a sidewalk clearing operation in front of the crowded Manggahan Pasig Public Market yesterday.

Operatives of the Bayan ng Dinalat Enforcement Office and the Sidewalk Operations Group were driving away illegal vendors on Market Avenue shortly before noon yesterday when somebody hurled a pillbox.

The blast—the second incident this month on the biggest public market in the metropolis—busted in oblivion downtime several two-inch nails, which injured four operatives assisting in the clearing operations and a grade school pupil, PO2 Rolando Ugsara told the Inquirer.

Operative Aimie Lunar, 46, said they had been clearing the sidewalk in front of the market regularly.

"But we intensified our operations in the last three days because we noticed more and more vendors have occupied the sidewalk as Christmas nears," he said in Filipino.

Ed Fellow operatives Teodoro Dizon, 27, and Victor Agot, 32, were wounded during the blast. Dizon sustained wounds in the body while Agot was injured in the left knee, Ugsara said.

PO1 Tanseloo Tarea, 30, of the Police Community Precinct 4 in front of the market also sustained wounds to his legs. Sidewalk cleaning hood Magdalena Ines, 47, was also injured, Ugsara added.

Eight-year-old Ishmar Haez, who was at the market with his parents, both vendors, was wounded in the ankle.

Lunar told the Inquirer the pillbox appeared to have been dropped from the upper floors of the market overlooking the sidewalk when the cleaning operation was ongoing.

"We are sure it was the work of some illegal vendors. Who else would do that to us?" he added.

Police recovered at least 13 two-inch nails on the sidewalk, but Ugsara said no witness could identify any suspects so far. This is the second time this month an alleged pillbox exploded in the public market.

Two weeks ago, three persons were hurt when a pillbox exploded in front of the market entrance. An 4:30 a.m. yesterday, Simon finally gave himself up to police. He was taken to the Tribunal police station for investigation and questioning.

JV Yap

MetroBriefs

A holiday from raids

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has imposed a moratorium on all raids beginning next week until after the New Year celebrations. NBI Director Nestor Mantaring confirmed from Dec. 15 to Jan. 7, agents conducting operations on establishments and syndicates would "take a break." "We have been doing this every year to prevent misunderstandings between the agents and the owners of the establishments especially during the Christmas season," Mantaring explained. He added that the shop owners, particularly those selling counterfeit items, may think that the NBI operatives could be soliciting money for their trips. However, our investigators will continue working on cases involving terrorism, drugs, killings, and the proliferation of explosives and firearms," Mantaring said.

Maygee C. Ortiz

Hostage drama in QC

TENSION gripped a community in Quezon City late Sunday night after a man believed to be mentally ill took his 59-year-old mother hostage. The crisis ended only after five hours of negotiation, as Eddie Suarez, 28, turned himself in and released Trinidad Cenia unharmed before yesterday, according to police. The hostage situation started at 11:15 p.m. Sunday inside Cenia's home at Lot 18, Gumamela, Capitol 1 Subdivision, Barangay Sandoval, Sr., said Cenia investigator PO2 Emmanuel Lagarteja in his report. The suspect had managed to sneak into the house and threatened to stab Cenia with a kitchen knife, police said. Operatives of the Tahanan Police Station led by Insp. Leonardo Collado and agents of the Special Weapons and Tactics unit led by Insp. Lauiben Sing responded and tried to talk Suarez into surrendering. Ong said Suarez was shaking, and did not seem to be in the right frame of mind. "He said there were some people out to get him. That he asked if he could talk to his father. But we didn't know where to find his father," Ong told the Inquirer. At 4:30 a.m. yesterday, Simon finally gave himself up to police. He was taken to the Tahanan police station for investigation and questioning.

JV Yap

Drive vs illegal terminals

SUPERINTENDENT chief of the Manila Police District Traffic Enforcement Group yesterday warned bus operators illegal terminals of public vehicles that cause heavy traffic along major roads in the city. Supt. Lionel Jarwas said traffic cops would be strictly enforced to clear the roads of obstructions during the Christmas season. "Our policemen would no longer be entertaining illegal and Jeepney terminals in Divisoria," he added. According to Jarwas, Mayor Lito Atienza had issued a directive to illegal terminals for public vehicles. Jarwas mentioned Dapi Station in Pritil where vans parked recently by Atienza because of his failure to implement a ban in the city streets.

Cheryl C. Arobio

Reckoning with the law of karma

ON TARGET

RANDY TAÑA

THE CHOST AT THE LUNETA that the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) refused to send a message to President Macapagal-Arroyo that the bishops have had enough of this administration's unresolved issues was gosh-pooled to a meaEforward.

Crowd estimates ranged from 11,000 to 30,000, hardly enough to make this government worry.

But if history repeats itself, the gathering at the Luneta Sunday signaled the beginning of the end of the Arroyo administration.

The crowds that attended rallies in the wake of the assassination of former Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr. were small at first. They became bigger, culminating in EDSA I in February 1986.

* * *

What the Luneta crowd lacked in numbers, it made up for in the quality of its participants. Religious leaders and members of the middle class—people in business, professionals and students—were there.

The Luneta crowd lacked the bulk because there were very few members of the C-D-E group, the lower-middle and the lower class. But then these people will eventually follow their leaders who belong to the intellectual or middle class. The middle or intellectual class may lack the numbers to oust presidents, but then it leads to toppling abusive regimes to this country. The crysanths or EDSA I and Edsa II were spearheaded by the middle class.

* * *

You reap what you sow. Such is the universal law of karma.

Sin Arroyo planted the storm clouds of President Erap by moving with his generals. Yes, she might have had a good reason for taking part in the plot to overthrow Erap. But then, she was Erap's secretary of social welfare and development.

When some of ERAP Cabinet members plotted to oust her at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal, that was just a preview of what would happen to her for doing the same thing to Erap. What goes around comes around. However, I would be happy to be proved wrong.

* * *

I'm a firm believer in karma. Many years ago, when I was young and reckless, my friends and I beat up a drunk who just happened to cross our path.

Three years later, while I was waiting for a ride home, some drunks parked my car. Even a record also waiting for a ride. Four people beat me up.

Was it any coincidence that I was assaulted in the vicinity of the place where my friends and I beat up the drunken man three years earlier? And was it any coincidence that all of my friends suffered the same fate that I had on different occasions?

No karmic debt in this world ever goes unpaid.

Binondo artifacts safe

By Tina G. Santos

THE MANILA GOVERNMENT yesterday directed city officials to immediately secure Plaza Calderon in Binondo following the discovery in the area of what appeared to be centuries-old artifacts from the Spanish era.

Mayor Lito Atienza said a pipelaying crew of water concessionaire Maynilad Water Services found portions of a cobblestone street beneath the plaza a few days ago.

He said cobblestones are considered rare and considered to have great historical value.

Atienza immediately instructed city engineer Armand Andres and Manny de Mayuela officer in charge Marina Santiago to coordinate with the National Historical Institute "to ensure that not a single piece of what would be a precious legacy is damaged or pilfered."

He noted that the City of Manila is one of the country's most important units of the pre-Hispanic and Spanish eras.

It hosts the Walled City of Intramuros, a theme park and several old churches, including the Manila Cathedral and San Agustin Church.

Court stops Binay . . .

From page A1

in City Hall while his lawyers went to the CA which subsequently issued a 60-day TRO.

"Like in boxing, our boss was wounded too. I hope there won't be a second run. But if there is a second run, I hope I can count on your support," Binay said told his cheering supporters after the issuance of the TRO.

"Wherefore, the application for preliminary injunction is granted. Let a writ of preliminary injunction be issued upon petitioner's posting of bond, said the Court's approved thereof, in the sum of P500,000 each ... enjoining respondents, their agents or anybody acting in their behalf, from implementing or causing the implementation or continued implementation of the order of preventive suspension ... and from proceeding with the investigation in OP Case No. 06-B-305, with respect to petitioner Binay and Elmer Mayor Ernesto Mercado ..." the resolution stated.

Apart from Binay also covered by the CA ruling were Mercado, Councilors Arjomar Erwin Binay Jr., Ferdinand Esmilla, Erlinda Gonzales, Ricardo Javier, Eunice Pano, Monique Lagdameo, Benito Medina, Ernesto Aquillaga, Israel Custodio, Glee Tolentino, Divina Jimenez, Ramonito Pangilinan, Belen Pula Jr., Rodolfo Jose, and Christine Hernando.

The issuance of the preliminary injunction or the preventive suspension order against the petitioners, according to the CA, is necessary in order not to render its proceedings on the case worthless.

"To allow the implementation of the questioned preventive suspension order pending the determination of the propriety of its issuance, and giving public respondents an imprimatur to proceed with the questioned investigation, would render the petition and our resolution thereto, nay the whole processes and proceedings thereon, nugatory," the CA said.

The court added that the purpose of a preliminary injunction is to preserve the status quo until the merits of the case can be fully heard.

Binay and his allies had asked the CA to nullify the administrative complaint against them on the ground that it was unverified and filed in the wrong forum, in violation of Section 61 of the Local Government Code.

They added that the suspension had no basis since the Ombudsman or department should have dismissed the case instead of forwarding it to Malacañang.

The petitioners argued that Ombudsman's complaint was lacking in substance as he failed to name the alleged ghost employees.

DID YOU KNOW

CAMP Aguinaldo in Quezon City, the general headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, was called Camp Murphy when it was established on Jan. 11, 1936, after Frank Murphy, the last American governor-general in the country. It was renamed after Emilio Aguinaldo, the first Philippine president, in June 1987 by virtue of Republic Act 4434.

The camp has a total land area of 138 hectares, housing more than 6,000 personnel. Camp Aguinaldo is also the home of the Department of National Defense and the National Defense College of the Philippines.

Cyril C. Bautista, Inquirer Research

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Brother International Phils. Corp. a leader in home and business IT peripherals that focuses on the 'Customer First' approach, announces its latest next generation inkjet all in once for the home.

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Brother incorporated the amazing 1-3pl (picolitre) ink droplet technology, normally found only in high end inkjet all-in-ones, to close ink droplet gaps. When used with Innobella Ink & Paper, printouts will have prominent, greater sharpness and true definition.

Adding brilliance to color prints is Brother's new Memory Color Technology that mimics the way people perceive color in real life as it is ingrained in their memory. Incorporated into each MYHOME Series model is a database so true to life colors. Every shade of color in an image is carefully matched again in the database colors to create the right blend of inks to produce the most spectacularly realistic printouts.

Innobella Ink & Paper are fade resistant thus ensuring that prolonged exposure to light and water will not cause printouts to fade with time. Innobella ink also contains carefully selected chemicals to prevent clogging of the print head for smoother operation. This ensures reliability and durability of the MyHome Series.

With a unique chemical formulation coating the paper surface, printing with Innobella Glossy Photo Paper will result in high quality prints with richer colors, sharper images and better definition.

All models are available through Brother International Philippines authorized dealers or you may call Brother Helpdesk at 581-9600 or fax the number at 581-9000.

North Korea talks resume after nuclear bomb test

BEIJING—NORTH KOREA SIGNALED NO signs of compromise as crucial nuclear disarmament talks restarted Monday in Beijing, nine months after the reclusive nation conducted its first atomic weapons test.

Top envoys from the six nations—host China, the two Koreas, the United States, Japan and Russia—gathered here for the first time in 13 months but Pyongyang gave no indication it was prepared to abandon its ambitions.

In his opening speech to the forum, its envoy Kim Kye-Gwan repeated a list of his nation's long-standing demands and said Pyongyang was "satisfied" with having nuclear weapons, a South Korean official told reporters on Sunday.

"They (North Koreans) presented a maximum list of their demands. It was like a summary of all of their previous demands," the official said.

"The gist was that they would be able to dismantle nuclear weapons only after the United States dropped what they think is a hostile policy."

North Korea pulled out of the talks in November last year in protest at US financial sanctions imposed against it, then stunned the world with its first ever nuclear test on Oct. 9.

Kim said after arriving in Beijing on Saturday that Pyongyang's decision to go nuclear was because of the "hostile" US policy against it.

"The nuclear issues cannot be resolved until the United States takes a co-existence policy," Kim said. "I'm not optimistic about prospects for the six-party talks."

In his opening remarks, Chinese envoy Wu Dawei said the key priority this week was to achieve a third action in September last year in which North Korea agreed to give up its nuclear program in exchange for security guarantees, energy benefits and other aid.

"The issues that we will discuss at the talks are of a profound and complicated nature," Wu said.

The chief US envoy to the talks, Christopher Hill, also said ahead of the start of negotiations that the United States would push for a North Korean re-statement to the September agreement.

"What the OPSE [North Korea] needs to do is to get serious with denuclearization," Hill said.

"If they get serious with denuclearization, a lot of good things can happen. ... If they do not get serious about denuclearization, such things will go away," according to South Korean media reports, the United States has offered the North another incentive to guarantee signed by President George W. Bush as part of a package of measures to tempt it into dropping its program.

While Hill has been cautious about the chances of success, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last week that the United States was aiming for a denuclearized North Korea by January 2009, when Bush leaves office.

But many analysts who have closely followed the six-nation talks say North Korean leader Kim Jong Il has no intention of surrendering the nuclear program his nation has spent decades developing.

"Now that North Korea has the nuclear bargaining chip, it is never going to give it up," said John Feffer, the global affairs director at the US-based International Relations Center.

For North Korea, one of its main goals as this month's talks is to secure the lifting of the US financial sanctions, imposed last year for alleged counterfeiting and money laundering.

The United States had maintained the sanctions should not be brought into the six-party forum, insisting they were a law enforcement issue unrelated to the North's nuclear program. AFP

US solons told Castro not dying, that he'll return

HAVANA—CUBAN LEADER FIDEL CASTRO is not dying, does not have cancer, and will return to public life, Cuban government officials told US Congress members visiting the communist country.

"He never told by government officials that he does not have cancer and his condition is not terminal," Rep. Jeff Flake, an Arizona Republican who led the bipartisan delegation, told reporters on Sunday.

"The party line is that Fidel is coming back. He does not have cancer," said Rep. Jane Harman, a California Democrat.

The 10-member congressional delegation, the largest to go to Cuba since Castro's 1959 revolution, was ending a three-day visit aimed at improving ties between Havana and Washington.

But their efforts to launch a new dialogue with Cuba on the assumption that Castro was out of the picture were rebuffed by Communist officials who insisted he was recovering and that their long-time ideological foe would have to change its policy of sanctions first.

The Cuban government blames US sanctions enforced since 1962 for economic hardships endured by Cubans.

Castro, 80, has not been seen in public since then and his absence has fueled speculation that he is dying.

His closest ally, Venezuelan President Hugo, said on Friday that Castro does not have cancer, but is fighting a "great battle" against a "very serious" illness.

US intelligence chief John Negroponte said in an interview with The Washington Post published on Friday that Castro was near death and had "months, not years" to live. Reuters

The WORLD

Edna Lorenzo B. Bueno

Fragile truce in Gaza after violence

GAZA CITY—A FRAGILE TRUCE BETWEEN rival Palestinian groups was holding Monday after a day of deadly factional violence following President Mahmoud Abbas's controversial call for early elections.

Amid the tenuous calm, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was due to hold talks with Abbas and to mark Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the latest leg of a regional tour aimed in part at reviving the dormant Middle East peace process.

Despite the accord between Abbas's Fatah party and the ruling Hamas, which has rejected the election call as a coup—exchanges of automatic gunfire continued late into the night in Gaza City.

Four people have been killed and dozens wounded in the impassioned protests since Abbas called for holding early presidential and parliamentary elections on Saturday.

Hamas, which has been in power only since March after a shock election win over Fatah, has slammed the move as unconstitutional and tantamount to a call for civil war.

After a day of cursing gunfire on the Gaza streets and in-fist-cuffs attacks that killed three people on Sunday, the two groups agreed to a truce.

But the ceasefire got off to an inauspicious start when Fatah bemoaned a new confrontation with Hamas called to announce the truce, alleging violations.

Abbas's call for early elections has set off fears that the bitter power struggle between Hamas and the president's men Fatah faction could ignite a full-blown civil war.

The victims of the violence have included a 19-year-old woman and 13-year-old boy caught in the crossfire and two Fatah loyalists—a member of the presidential guards and a colonel in the national security services.

Unidentified gunmen also fired on Jacobian Hanan foreign minister Mahmud Zahar's vehicle in Gaza. He escaped unscathed.

That attack came just days after gunmen fired on Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya's convoy in what Hamas branded an assassination attempt.

Abbas and elections were the way to resolve the seething tensions with Hamas, which have paralyzed the Palestinian peace process, already broke because of a Hamas-led Zionist.

"To break the vicious circle and prevent our lives from deteriorating further and our cause from receding, I have decided to call early presidential and legislative elections. Let the people have their say and decide," he said.

But he did not set a date. Hamas officials said they would need 150 days to organize a ballot once Abbas issues an official decree.

Two opinion polls released Sunday showed that more than 60 percent of Palestinians support holding early elections. Asked to vote on them, Fatah would narrowly win a parliamentary election with 42 percent of the vote, compared with 30 percent for Hamas.

In Cairo on Saturday, Blair had urged foreign powers to back Abbas's decision call.

"This is the time for the international community," Britain-behind him, to help build up his authority and his capability in delivering improvement in living standards for the Palestinian people, but also the progress that we all want to see in resolving the Israel-Palestine issue." AFP

PALESTINIAN Fatah party supporters, loyal to President Mahmud Abbas, hold his poster as they rally in support of the president in Dec. 15. AFP

Red Crescent stops work in Baghdad after kidnaps

BAGHDAD—IRAQI RED CRESCENT aid workers suspended work in war-torn Baghdad on Monday after two dozen of their colleagues fell victim in the latest mass kidnap to shock a city plagued by sectarian violence.

Meanwhile, new US Defense Secretary Robert Gates was to take office in Washington amid deepening divisions among US government officials and policy experts about how to handle the worsening crisis in Iraq.

"Only in Baghdad have we stopped, or under more pressure to free those who have been kidnapped," the Iraqi Red Crescent's secretary general Mazen Abdullah told AFP one day after the abduction.

"We are the only organization working in all Iraq. We don't want to stop," he added, emphasizing that the closure applied only to the Red Crescent's health and relief workers in the capital.

In addition to the main branch targeted in the kidnapping, the Iraqi Red Crescent has closed another 40 subsidiary offices in Baghdad, affecting more than 600 staff, a large proportion of them security guards, Abdullah said.

Thirteen of the 30 men snatched in Monday's brazen raid by gunmen dressed in police uniforms have been released, including three guards from the nearby Finnish Embassy and 18 Red Crescent guards and drivers, Abdullah added. AFP

UK cops arrest suspect in murders of 5 prostitutes

IPSWICH, England—Police arrested a 37-year-old man Monday morning on suspicion of murdering five prostitutes in eastern England, a senior officer said.

The man was arrested at about 7:20 a.m. at his home in Tuesley, near the port of Felixstowe, Detective Chief Supt. Stewart Gull of Suffolk Police said in a brief statement to reporters.

"He has been arrested on the suspicion of murdering all five women," Gull said.

"The man is currently in custody at a police station in Suffolk where he will be questioned about the deaths later today," he said.

Wesley is 11th resident of Ipswich, where all five victims were known to work as prostitutes.

Their naked bodies were found dumped in rural areas near Ipswich, 110 km northeast of London, over a 10-day span beginning Dec. 2.

Earlier in the morning, police announced that coroner's inquests into the deaths of Tania Nicol, Anneli Alderton, Paula Clennell and Annette Nicholls had been postponed.

Clennell, 24, died of cocaine toxicity, and Alderton, 24, was strangled, a senior pathologist determined. Post-mortem examinations of the bodies of Nicol, 19, and Nicholls, remained inconclusive on the cause of death.

An inquest into the death of Gemma Adams, 25, was opened and adjourned last week. The pathologist reached no conclusion about the cause of her death.

The investigation had strained the resources of one of England's smallest police forces, and 140 specialist investigators were brought in from across Britain to join 160 Suffolk officers working on the case.

On Sunday morning, police had received more than 15,000 calls from the public offering information, Gull said. AP

IMAGES OF 2006
A steamer resides in a diorama of a 1971 carnival Moscow is a shopping center in Moscow July 21, 2006. The 14-meter wide model that [illegible] the world as part of a rundown marking the 40th anniversary of the Soviet Union, is to be auctioned off in August. REUTERS

What's most politically wrong word?

LOS ANGELES—"MACACA" TOU are number one.

The "offensive racial remark," used by outgoing Republican Sen. George Allen of Virginia to describe a Democratic activist of Indian descent who was trailing his campaign, was named the most politically incorrect word of the year on Friday by Global Language Monitor, a nonprofit group that studies word usage.

"The word might have changed the political balance of the US Senate, since Allen's utterance (an offensive slang term for Indians from the Arab-controversy) nearly torpedoed his election bid," said the group's head, Paul JJ Payack.

Allen narrowly lost in Democrat James Webb in November, helping make it possible for the Democrats to capture control of the Senate.

In second place on this year's list was "Global Warming Denier," for someone who believes that climate change has nothing to do with scientific theory or dogma.

"There are now proposals that global-warming deniers be treated the same as Holocaust deniers professional societies, lobbyists, editors and, even, jail," Payack said.

In third was "illiteracy" substituting for "literacy," Payack said there are nearly 900,000 Google citations for "illiteracy" all based on a mistaken assumption that "literacy" is a word itself.

"When Herodotus wrote the first history, the word meant simply an 'inquiry,'" he said.

In August, Global Language Monitor declared "medicare" and "Pilfolify"—two words popularized by political satirist Stephen Colbert on his TV show "The Colbert Report"—as the top information buzzwords of the year. Reuters

Americans abroad renounce citizenship over taxes

PARIS—SEE IS A FORMER MAsuer, a native Californian and now an ex-American who prefers to remain discreet about abandoning her citizenship. After 18 years of proudly considering herself an American, she turned her US passport last month without ceremony, becoming an alien in the view of her homeland.

"It's a really hard thing to do," said the woman, a 46-year-resident of Geneva, Switzerland, who had tired of the cost and time of filing yearly US tax returns on top of her Swiss taxes. "I pour heaps pouring this off. But it's my life and the other tax, I don't care if I die with only one Swiss franc to my name, but the US shouldn't get money I earned here when I die."

Historically, small numbers of Americans have vanished in their passports every year for political and economic reasons, with the numbers reaching a high of about 2,000 during the Vietnam War in the early 1970s.

But after Congress sharply raised taxes this year for many Americans living abroad, some international tax lawyers say they detect rising demand from citizens to renounce ties with the United States, the only developed country that taxes its citizens while they live overseas. Americans abroad are also moved in the countries where they live.

"The administrative costs of being an American and living outside the US have gone up dramatically," said Marnie Michaels, a tax lawyer with Baker & McKenzie in Zurich, Switzerland.

A spokeswoman for the US Embassy in London, Karen Hochheld, said expatriates usually took the step "because they do not have strong ties to the United States and do not believe that they will ever live there in the future." AFP

Income disparity in rich Singapore comparable to poor Kenya's

By Grant De Cleyn

SINGAPORE—AFTER BEING DISowned by the teenage daughter of a Singapore member of parliament stumbled across the blog of a Singaporean who wrote that he was worried about losing his job, she thought she'd give him a piece of her mind.

She called him "one of many wretched, uncircumcised, circumcising lowlife in our country" on her own blog and signed off with "Please, get out of my dime-saving face."

Her son filtered by hundreds of fellow bloggers, but when his father Wee Siew Kim—an MP in Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's People's Action Party (PAP)—and newspaper that "her basic point is reasonable," the row moved well beyond the blogosphere.

The episode highlighted a deep rift in Singapore society and was an embarrassment for the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and Prime Minister Lee, who has made the reduction of the income gap one of the priorities of his new government.

"Coming from an MP in the prime minister's constituency, these comments really were political dynamite," political commentator Seah Chiang Nee told Reuters.

"If the political arrogance and elitism get any worse, the PAP will lose more electoral ground," he added.

Singapore is Asia's second richest country after Japan with a gross domestic product per capita of about $27,000, ranking between EU member Italy and Spain. But in terms of income disparity, Singapore is in altogether different company.

Singapore's Gini index—which measures inequality of income distribution among households—of 42.5 puts it between Burundi and Kenya, the UN Human Development Report 2006 shows.

"Yes, the gini coefficient is very high. Through housing, health care and education, we have tried to narrow the income gap, but not through wages," Minister Delegate Minister Mah Bow Tan told Reuters in an interview last month.

Singapore pays no employment benefits, no pensions and has no legal minimum wage, but citizens to dump and overflows, health care is subsidized and the government gives subsidies to first-time buyers of government-built flats.

Last month, Singapore's first parliament session since the May A poll was dominated by the inequality theme.

PM Lee ruled out the introduction of old-age pensions, a minimum wage or European-style welfare.

"We have treated welfare as a dirty word. The opposition, I think the Workers' Party has called for a 'permanent seventh' annual needs-based welfare system, I think that is to create dirtier than words," he said in a speech on Nov. 13.

But he acknowledged that since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the income gap had widened, and said that his government plans to "tilt the balance in favor of the lower-income groups."

While Lee's ruling PAP is in no danger of losing its stranglehold on parliament—where it has 82 out of 84 elected seats—the growing income disparity has fuel its credibility. Reuters

SPORTS
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendrez

WHAT'S INSIDE
Arenas weaves magic as Wizards pip Lakers /A23

RP AMATEUR

Bayron, Dacudao lead

By Marcus R. Cardillo

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—VETERANS JOY Bayron and Lonie Dacudao held many under adverse conditions yesterday but Michael Bihag Rosenkrantz is the most talkative of the Philippine Amateur golf championship at the exclusive The Country Club here.

Bayron and Dacudao matched par 72s over at Bihag, because medalist is the owner Dodge Sonic Gomez, hotel the pressure of becoming the biggest casualty after committing a double bogey-fanned 83.

Tall and lanky but not the longest of hitters, Bihag, who won the Singapore Am two years ago, stood in 10th place with his score of 44-39 and still have to make something happen in the one-and-round rodeo if he hopes to advance.

A youngster from Bacolod showed up the veterans and intimidated her version of a level and to pass the ladies' division.

Mia Pirzo, runner-up to Frances Bondal last year, conquered the long layout and the winds that virtually bonded the field over to take a two-stroke lead at the start of a similar two-round classification phase.

Tournament format for both divisions calls for a 36-hole classification, before the top 32 players advance to match play tomorrow where the No. 1 duelists with No. 32, No. 2 dogs it out with No. 31 and so on.

The defending champions—Jose Pagsanan and Bondal—are not around.

Pagsanan, who methodically tore Malaysian Siva Chandhran apart in last year's 36-hole finals at the Manapan, turned pro at the turn of the year and won the Asian Tour's Rookie of the Year award recently.

The 19-year-old Bondal became one of the youngest members of the Australian national team after making action for the 94th Commonwealth in Johannesburg, South Africa, recently.

With the ground-down, wind-swept The Country Club layout playing its toughest yet, the tournament is anybody's game.

"It was a struggle—not down, as it always has been at the Country Club," Bayron told the to-goose to Filipino. "But right now, the objective is to advance and not do anything foolish because the match play is entirely different."

Bayron, who annexed the No. 1 RP ranking after Pagsanan left the national pool, fired two birdies against the same number of bogeys for a 36-36 which for the Davao-based duffer, a 49.5-to-overdub stationary who last played for Del Monte, churned out later to be adventure.

National player Dhevin Dumandan shared third place with an 89 pool member Ruffa Aderiel Vila with Jacqueline Marcel Pingol leading three others with 75s. National Caddies' Open program products Mark Fernando and Jamil Abalos also shot 75s like Joel Quiaco Anthony Fernando led five other players with 76s.

Pagunsan honored; Singh top awardee

BANGKOK—FILIPINO JOVIC IMAZON shared honors with India's Jeev Milkha Singh at the Asian Tour's 13th Awards Gala 2004 at the Oriental Hotel here Sunday night.

Pagunsan was named Rookie of the Year after finishing seventh with $205,367 on the 10th Order of Merit. The two-time Southeast Asian Games silver medalist won top 10s, capped by a second place effort in last month's UBS Open in Hong Kong.

Singh topped a dream season when he won the inaugural HSBC Special Achievement and swooped up the Player's Player of the Year. The two accolades were in addition to the UBS Order of Merit title which Singh claimed for the first time in his career following a stellar season in which he won the Volvo China Open and registered five other top 10s for a record haul of $503,684 from 14 starts.

"It's been a dream year for me. To receive the recognition from my fellow competitors, it's a great honor. Winning three awards will stay with me for the rest of my life. It means a lot as this is the place where I started my career.

"The Asian Tour has been a family to me because this is where I started from. Everyone on Tour is so friendly and I'll never forget that," said Singh, who received a standing ovation after being crowned Asia's number one. He is the third Indian after Arjun Atwal and Jeev Randhawa to claim the mantle.

Singh, who has propelled into the world's top 50 which guarantees him starts in all four Majors next year, also enjoyed tremendous success in Europe where he won the season-ending Volvo Masters in Spain and also triumphed twice in Japan.

Anthony Kang of the United States won the Bobby Locke award after snaring a total of 2222 birdies throughout 2004, which saw the duke's first stage an impressive tally of 27 tournaments with a record of over $24 million in total prize money.

India's Arjit Randhawa took home the lowest stroke average with 69.74, a wonderful reflection of his consistent performance in which he won the Hero Honda Indian Open and finished sixth on the UBS Order of Merit.

Simon Yates of Scotland hit the most greens in regulation with a strike rate of 71 percent to top the category while Thailand's Chawalit Plaphol took home the lowest putting average award with 1.69 putts per GIR.

PAGUNSAN

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

NCA holds 2nd leg today

THE NATIONAL CYCLISTS Association will hold the second leg of its derby circuit today at the world-class Pasay City velodrome.

The 5-unit derby, which follows the highly successful NCA first leg held Dec. 12-14, will be hosted by Gov. Joe Ejercito.

Stalwarts Naz Mojer Jay Tupaz, Nestor Mercado and Lito Ordinario emerged victorious during the first leg and have vowed to defend their titles today.

Other contenders are Hanson Arbilla, Manolo Lopez, Manny Pacquiao, Dante Amoranto, Jerry Ramos, Jose Ike Pineda, Sec. Ronnie Puno, Jun Santiago, Edwin Abella, Ray Jose, Ricky Valencia, Ireneo Villar, Mario Villanueva, Ritchie Ramos, Art Serafin, Edwin Santos, Eric Asis Reyes, Michael Go, Leandro Cabebe, Jerry Ramos and Ney Ramos.

Also entered are Ingwig Tony Qwee, chair Rudy Alfonso, Raul Rivadeneira, Edgar Santos, Al Magnayon, Pete Bedic, Elvin Cardin, Jong Argao, Jet Fernando, Bayer Jones, Ellen Nagaoy, the Mindanaoan brothers, Benjie Lim, Ned Estrellado, Tony Lanida, Leste Cua, Jun and Rudy Angat, Ray Reyes, Nestor Mercado, Lito Orfiliana, Rudy Isabel, Manny and Imman Santos, Jumelbig Cayanan Jr., Fidding Reyes, Jerry Yee, Roy Marcos and Pol Saavedra.

SPORTSWATCH

Last chance to join Makati cocktest

ATLAST OF SIXTY-TO-THE MAKATI CYCLING CLUB'S "SUMMER CYCLOCROSS" OF P200 (Pasumbong Salandan Awards derby children) Dec. 23, 27 and 30. Pretest: one Lido Orillaza, Rudy Talavera and William Go or the Makati Sports Commission Complex yesterday. Each test covers a qualifying course (3.6 mile) and five champ test Dec. 23 and 27 to accommodate the influx of weekend participants from the provinces. He says that P3 million in guaranteed prize awaits the winners, for an affordable entry fee of P1,000. A bonus prize of P100,000 will be divided among three members in the overall team. The Makati cyclo will 1-4, 2-3 and 3-series) will compete for the title on Dec. 30. Call 896-3646 and 899-4474.

New Year derby at Cainta Dec. 29

CAINTA MAYOR JUNJUN CASTILLEJO, SUN MANAGER BY HON. SPORTSMAN Jun Mendoza, presents the New Year Encounter 9-Cock Derby on Dec. 29 with P600,000 in guaranteed prize. He hinted, not discouraged will bring home a brand new motorcycle. Entry fee is P1,000 and redemption is P5,000. Elimination, no more than 500 cocks from outside Cainta, contact Atty. Dan Dela Cruz at 654-1111 (Antipolo) or 646-3000 (Cainta). A jackpot prize of P400, 000 awaits the champion. Entry fee is P1,000 and redemption is P5,000. The fighters will champion and runner. PHILSPORTS has a brand new redemption with P5,000, while the winning handler and gaffer will receive P1,000 and P3,000, respectively. For the second chance P200,000 and second new redemption. The handler and gaffer will also receive P4,000 and P2,000, respectively. The derby will also receive prizes. The first 10 winners and not 10 winners will get P1,000 each as bonus. For inquiries, contact 0919-3004, 646-3000 or 0920-9219111 (mobile) Sequoia.

Asiad medalists get cash rewards

By Jane Navarro

ANTONIO Ealinca, Richer by P2.3 million.

CONTINUED

AS CONGRATULATED BILLIARDS PLAYERS WILL LEAD 17 OTHER PILIPINO athletes who will receive their cash incentives today for bringing home 19 medals, four of them golds, from the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, recently.

Antonio Calinca, who shares for silver his basic description as a "weak" billiards team with a gold-silver medal effort, will get a windfall of P2.3 million from President Macapagal-Arroyo during a courtesy call by the victorious nationals this morning at Malacañang Palace.

A total of P12.5 million will be given away with honors Jose Tipon and Violito Payla and wushu bet Nese Candao receiving P1.5 million each in the other gold medalists of the PF delegation fare hundred 20th overall Ivonna Bellod (E) nations.

The monetary rewards were authorized through RA 8949 known as the Sports Incentives Act and approved in 2001 when P1 million was reserved for a gold, P500,000 for a silver and P250,000 for bronze from the funds of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation.

The President then announced additional incentives of P500,000 for a gold, P300,000 for silver and P200,000 for bronze on the second week of the Asiad.

Calinca won the gold medal in 9-ball singles over compatriot Jeffrey De Luna after earlier causing the gold in the 8-ball singles in a performance that dressed their wounds many after billiards aces in the country came short three (Rono) Reyes and Ca.

The two silvers in billiards were matched by taekwondoists Mary Antonette Rivero and Sibonbon Ca. Maria Elena Bellone of Gazette and wushu's Orlando Polancos seventh for the other silvers which were worth P800,000 for such athletes.

Winning bronze medals worth P500,000 each were Kaitlyn Sunico-Alfeno, Veronica Domingo and Manuel Pinete Jr. of bodybuilding's Geoffrey Casero and Gershom Sasabu, Noel Espinosa of karate and golf's Michael Bilat.

Hi-American Cecil Simms, who partnered with Eric Tolos, also a Pilipino, in winning the bronze in the men's doubles events will get P450,000 for also sending up third in men's singles. Tolos will receive P150,000.

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CHAMPS: Saint Mystic Montessori table tennis team, coached by Richard Magpantay (left), checked the girl's and boy's elementary and high school titles in the recent 5th Bossa Table Tennis National Inter-Scholastic team event and 5th Gerry Cruz Memorial event.

PSC chair leaves fate to President

By Marc Anthony Reyes

I WILL GO WHEREVER THE PRESIDENT would like to.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez declared this yesterday as he reported back to work in the country's sports czar following a successful campaign in the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

While he fell short by one gold of his predicted target of five victories, the Asiad haul of four golds, six silvers and nine bronzes was the country's best since the 1962 Jakarta Games where the Filipinos then came up with a 7-5-9, 21-medal.

The performance sets all the more impressive since the PSC pulled it off despite a meager budget of P50 million which was way below what the country spent when it captured the Southeast Asian Games overall championship for the first time last year in Manila.

Still Ramirez said he's leaving his fate up to President Macapagal-Arroyo. "I will serve the President anywhere, wherever she wants, not even if not in the PSC," Ramirez told the Inquirer. He is expected to get the Presidential reply today where he accompanies the Asiad medalists in their courtesy call at Malacañang.

WASHINGTON Wizards' Gilbert Arenas slams against Los Angeles Lakers' Brian Scalabrine in their NBA game in Los Angeles, Sunday. AP

Arenas weaves magic as Wizards pip Lakers

LOS ANGELES—GILBERT ARENAS set a franchise record with 60 points, 16 of them in overtime, to lead the Washington Wizards to a 147-141 victory over Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday night.

In a Kobe-like performance, Arenas outscored the Lakers' Bryant by 16 points.

The Wizards' guard went 17-of-33 from the floor, including 5-of-12 from 3-point range. He made 21 of his 27 free throws and also had eight assists and eight rebounds.

He scored 14 points in a row for Washington, including a pair of 3-pointers, in the stretch of the 5-minute overtime.

Bryant, coming off a 10-point performance his previous game, had 46 points on 15-of-34 shooting, but had just four points in overtime.

Antawn Jamison had 21 points and 13 rebounds for Washington, and Caron Butler scored 27. Shaquille Rashaunwere, coming in place of the injured Lamar Odom, for the Lakers, had 27 points, and Luke Walton had 15 points and a career-high 11 assists.

The previous franchise high was 56 by Earl Monroe on Feb. 13, 1968, against the Lakers in overtime, when the Wizards were the Baltimore Bullets.

Earlier in Los Angeles, Pau Gasol had 22 points and 13 rebounds, Andrei Kirilenko added 24 points and eight assists, and Houston snapped a three-game losing streak without Yao Ming.

Rockets rookie Luther Head scored a career-high 21 points, Juwan Howard had 20 points and 11 rebounds, and Mehmet Okur added 17 points to help Utah open a five-game trip with a victory.

The Pacers, who had beaten Utah seven straight times over the course of the last four years, rallied from 21 points down in the third quarter and pulled to 108-94 on a basket by Jamaal Tinsley with 2:04 to go in the game. Rookie Dee Brown then hit four of six free throws in the closing seconds to finish the scoring for the Jazz.

Jermaine O'Neal led Indiana with 31 points.

In Toronto—Maxim Peterson had 23 points, and T.J. Ford added 22 points and 14 assists to lead the Raptors in their third straight victory without Chris Bosh. AP

Hornets' Stojakovic undergoes surgery

OKLAHOMA CITY—NEW ORLEANS/OKLAHOMA CITY forward Peja Stojakovic had a disc fragment removed from his lower back Saturday to ease the therapy he hopes will help quiet the three-time All-Star's return to the lineup.

The Hornets, who also announced that forward David West will have surgery on a bothersome right elbow, proceeded as timetable for Stojakovic's return. He has missed nine games already, with what initially were diagnosed as back spasms.

West has missed 11 games since straining his right forearm Nov. 16 against Portland, and New Orleans is on his boot without top scorer Stojakovic and with wounded elb.

"We still evaluate Peja and David once they have recovered from their respective bodies are make a determination on their seasons," Hornets general manager Jeff Bower said. "Although our team has been shaved by injuries as of late, we don't want to rush their returns to the detriment of their health." AP

Banner year for Federer

PARIS—ROGER FEDERER RUBBED stamped his name as one of the greatest players the world has seen with a year which was exceptional and record-shattering even by his own mighty standards.

The Swiss ended 2005 with 11 titles from 16 finals and a 92-5 match record.

He started in January with victory in Doha, ended it with a Davis Cup win in four years and, in between, won both the Australian Open title and defended his Wimbledon and US Open crowns.

At the age of 23, his career title count now stands at 45, his year's prize money of almost $8,000,000 took his lifetime total to $28,373,000 and sees his streak into a tough of despair over how to beat.

And Federer's reaction to their shortcomings? He thinks it's funny.

"I had to laugh at one stage how well I was playing. I always came up with a great answer," said Federer after he swept aside James Blake to be Masters Cup final in Shanghai.

"To come to this point in my career where I feel so happy with my game; it's some such a long way."

Federer played 17 tournaments in 2006 and reached the final in 16 of them.

Nine of his five defeats came at the hands of rival Rafael Nadal, surprisingly on the hard courts of Dubai, but not so surprisingly on the clay of Monte Carlo, Rome and Roland Garros, the only Grand Slam the world number one has yet to win.

Only once did he fail to reach a final when Britain's Andy Murray beat him in the second round of the Cincinnati Masters just days after a nappingsmatch in another city in Toronto.

His 2006 roll of honor reads: Doha, the Australian Open, Indian Wells, Monaco, Miami Masters, Halle, Wimbledon, Toronto Masters, US Open, Tokyo, Madrid Masters, Basel and the Masters Cup in Shanghai.

Federer comfortably finished 2006 as world number one for the third year in a row and will now pass Jimmy Connors' 25-year-old record of 160 consecutive weeks at the top on Feb. 16 next year.

"I think that is definitely one of the big records I've broken, maybe the biggest as far as my career," said the Swiss.

Such is his lead in the rankings that he is guaranteed to remain number one, even if he does not play again before March next year. AFP

ROGER Federer: Exceptional.

NBA probing Thomas' role in NY rumble

THE NBA IS INVESTIGATING WHETHER ISIAH Thomas, the president and coach of the New York Knicks, ordered a hard foul that resulted off a brawl with the Denver Nuggets Saturday night at Madison Square Garden, several people involved in the investigation said Sunday.

The Nuggets, according to those people, are investigating whether Thomas, Knicks guard Carmelo Anthony—one of which was captured by the MSG Network—that seemed to convey a threat. None of the people who spoke about the exchange wanted to be identified, because the investigation is not complete. Both players have been ejected after the fight, which started when Wendy Collins, a Knicks rookie, elbowed J.R. Smith as he charged across he was driving for a basket.

None of those players, and possibly Thomas, are expected to receive suspensions Monday from the league itself, which typically reviews fewer players, incidents and usually personnel. There is no known NBA precedent for punishing a coach for instigating a fight.

With 3 minutes, 32 seconds left in the game, the MSG broadcast focused on Thomas while Denver's Marcus Camby shot free throws. The Nuggets were leading by 117-100. Thomas, standing on the sideline, then starts talking to a Nuggets player. The player is not in the screen shot, but the broadcaster Mike Breen notes that Thomas is talking to Anthony.

There is no audio of Thomas, but he appears to say: "Hey, don't go to the basket right now. I wouldn't be nice." Seconds later, Thomas cocks his head, holds out his right palm and, with a slight smile, adds, "Just letting you know."

Calvin Andrews, Anthony's agent, confirmed Sunday night that Thomas had told Anthony to stay away from the area under the basket. Andrews indicated that Anthony gave that account to NBA officials earlier Sunday. Thomas also spoke to league officials. NYT News Service

Tiger tames field, donates $1.35M purse

TIGER WOODS: The no-one-minister

LOS ANGELES—TIGER WOODS FIRED A six-under par 66 the final round here Sunday to win the $1.35 million Target World Challenge, defeating US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy of Australia by four strokes.

World number one Woods finished on 18-under par 270 by carding his 12th birdie putt at the last hole, the only birdie of the last day at the 12th hole.

Two weeks shy of his 31st birthday, Woods won for the third time at the annual event he hosts at Sherwood Country Club, giving him eight triumphs and three more up 1971 by carding his 31st events over the latter half of 2006.

Woods' father Earl died in May but after winning the era in June's US Open, Woods has played some of his greatest golf, including the British Open and PGA Championship.

"Boy, life is full of surprises and you've got to deal with things as they come," Woods said. "Who's to know? If Earl didn't struggle and end up passing away I wouldn't have played his well in the summer? Who knows?"

Woods, who also won the Challenge in 2000 and 2004, captured the $1.35 million top prize and donated the money to the Southern California learning center for children that bears his name.

"It has been a year of unbelievable," Woods said. "On the golf course, it has been something else to have things come together, especially to win two majors this year."

Ogilvy fired a final round 71 to finish second on 274, one stroke ahead of US veteran Chris DiMarco, who led Woods by a stroke after the day began. DiMarco won $540,000, while Ogilvy took home $340,000.

"I hit a few bad shots but at least I disliked the round under par," Ogilvy said. "I would have had to shoot something pretty special to beat him today.

"It my mind I knew I was going to have to shoot 5- or 6-under to win. In hindsight I would have had 5-under for a playoff. I have Dad's."

"It's just harder to do that, especially when you're not in your best frame of mind after beginning a par 5 on the second hole. It's a frustrating way to start." AFP

SPORTS

Garcia, Prieto share honors in Southwoods Chairman's Cup

CARMONA, CAVITE—RAMY GARCIA and Alex Prieto, veteran campaigners in the Federation of Golf Club Leagues, emerged as overall champions of the 12th Chairman's Cup held last week at the Masters and Legends courses of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club.

Garcia, a scratch player, shot a three-under par 69 to capture the low gross plum while Prieto carded a seven-under 65 to win the low net crown.

Joseph Tantiansing came through with a 67 to grab top Class A honors. Gil Domingo, Andrew Tuazon, Richie Ramirez and Dennis Lao each submitted a 66 as they prevailed in Classes B, C, D and E, respectively.

Irene Young is ruled the Ladies 1 division, Arlene Deon won in Ladies 2, and Claire Ong topped the gamely opposite class. Manuel Chua (Mr. Division 1) and Tony de Leon (Division 2) were the other winners.

Southwoods chair Rebot John Rivera Young is ruled the Ladies 1 division, Arlene Deon won in Ladies 2, and Claire Ong topped the gamely opposite class. Manuel Chua (Mr. Division 1) and Tony de Leon (Division 2) were the other winners.

Southwoods chair Rebot John Rivera, who presented the trophies to the winners, thanked all participants and said he expects a bigger and better event next year.

Christine Nobles and Cecilio Lopez shared the spotlight after bagging the major raffle prizes, debuted in the last conference.

Veteran guard Kim Waterworth hated this early victory, adding his 10 points after averaging a measly 3.4 points in the first five outings.

Kim Waterworth will be up this time against Sista's young backcourt tandem of Ginny Arellano and Cheiki Mina.

Game Tuesday, the weekly Sista pair again come to the rescue as they combined for 27 points in an 82-72 triumph against Harbour Centre.

"We hope it will continue, we just have to work on our consistency," said Garcia.

Tropang Otis' win its two-game winning run and following a 92-85 setback to Cebuana Lhuillier. Pera-Paluta last home day.

Despite the loss, Senate Dan continued to dominate with averages of 14.7 points and 7.8 rebounds in the Spackle' last three games.

Jasmine M. Payo

Archers yet to gain top form—Franz

By Jasmine M. Payo

DAYS BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT, COACH Franz Pumaren downplayed expectations on the La Salle Green Archers.

"Physically the boys are strong, but the problem is we have no competition," he said. "We're like a boxer with no sparring partner, it's hard."

But in two months, the Archers impressive 6-0 mark off their many feats.

Be from their tentative opening-day win, a more confident Archers bagged the championship in the PBDB Flying V Hoopsters Invitational Cup Sunday.

The Archers easily crushed the Jose Rizal Bombers, 79-57, to complete a seven-game win streak (seven).

"It's a good feeling," said Pumaren. "After being in forced vacation, we're able to play again in a competitive league."

The Archers missed the last UAAP season as La Salle served a one-year suspension handed out last April for fielding two ineligible basketball players.

But the powerhouse crew had clearly put the past behind. Making the Archers' road to recovery much easier were veterans Jiro Matrimbuhan, TY Tang and JV Casio.

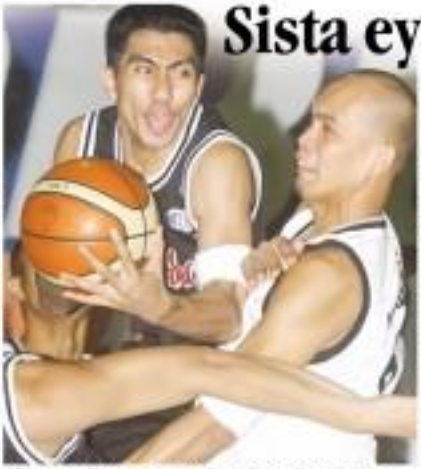
"He's elevating his maturity," said Pumaren of Matrimbuhan, the tournament's Most Valuable Player. The mauve-shooting Cadet was also named to the Mythical Team.

In the Finals, Tang pumped in a team-high 22 points, while the lanky Matrimbuhan shot 13 markers and hauled 11 rebounds.

La Salle's rookie force also shows promise including sweaty shooter Ruder Maldeo and burly blocker Ben Severe.

Pumaren said...or perhaps, assured...that the rookies have yet to reach their full potential.

"We're pretty decent already," he said. "But we're still not in the UAAP type of conditions. We have a long way to go."



JOSE Magdalara of Sistech tries to stop L.A. Tenorio of Harbour Centre in the PBL. RON BRIAGO

Sista eyes solo lead vs TeleTech

RENIEL DEVA SHOOTS FOR THE SOLO LEAD AGAINST A TELE-Tech team hoping to get a piece of top spot today in the PBL-Silver Cup at the Ortigas Sports Center in Pasig.

Both finishing on speed, the former Seniors and the TeleTech Yellow outfit at 2 p.m. with solo possession.

"They also love to run," said Sista coach Caloy Garcia. "We're hoping to beat TeleTech. I think they're one of the top three teams, they have the experience."

Sista shares the lead with Hapee (#2) and Mail and More at 5-2. But TeleTech, at 4-2, can join the crowd of room at the top with a win.

The erratic Magnolia Igniters and Tecora Oris Spades tangle at 4 p.m.

Both teams will try to wrap up their final assignment for the year on a winning note after dropping their respective games last Saturday.

TeleTech is severally gunning for its fourth straight win, its nearing Kenbi Rivera (202, 7-6.5), last Thursday, the Titans already matched their win total in their debut in the last conference.

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"We hope it will continue, we just have to work on our consistency," said Garcia.

Tropang Otis' win its two-game winning run and following a 92-85 setback to Cebuana Lhuillier. Pera-Paluta last home day.

Despite the loss, Senate Dan continued to dominate with averages of 14.7 points and 7.8 rebounds in the Spackle' last three games.

Jasmine M. Payo

OPBF champ Suico tackles Igarashi Jan. 20

RANDY SUICO

ORIENTAL AND PACIFIC Boxing Federation (OPBF) lightweight champion Randy Suico will fight Japanese Sot Igarashi in a ten-rounder, 15-round duels on Jan. 20 at the Korakuen Hall in Tokyo, Japan.

The 27-year-old Suico is hoping to earn yet another crack at a world title following his failed bid against WBA lightweight champ Jesus Dias last July 15.

A victory over Igarashi (15-4-2, 2 KOs) is expected to boost Suico's world ranking.

The Mandaue City-raised had puncher is currently ranked WBC No. 6 and WBA No. 12 lightweight. He has a record of 23 wins, 3 losses with 22 KOs.

Suico is currently in Japan serving as a chief second to WBO superbantamweight Yuhei Yahata. Yahata, who is being groomed as a possible foe for superstar Wataru Tsuyama.

The hard-punching Yahata, a Nonaraian now living in Japan, will defend his WBA title against Shintaro Michael Lozada on Jan. 7 also in Tokyo.

Reports said Suico was a bit disgusted during the first few days of sparring with Yahata, but has received some flaws and now engage the Nonaraian in semi exchanges at Akihiko Honda's Ichiro Gym. Salvin L. Lagumbay contributor

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Malanday captures chess title

DANIEL ADALIDA and Paulino Gallo handled their respective fields to lift Barangay Malanday in a 2½ victory over Barong A and the championship of the just concluded (2)Mabuhay edition of the Mayor's Cup Inter-Barangay Kiddy-Chess Team Championship late Sunday at the Marikina Sports Center in Marikina City.

Adalida, unmoved Lee Cruz after 41 moves of Sicilian Defense on board 1 while Gallo bested Raul Sta. Domingo after 46 moves of Ruy Lopez game on board 3. Bobby De La Paz governed a draw for Barong A by beating Ferdinand Licardo Pare on board 2.

It was a blow for Barong A, which focus its first four opponents before losing to Barangay Malanday.

Malanday and Barong A both tallied 4.5 points apiece to match point system after five games of play. Malanday however, won via the tiebreaker in the event organized by Marikina Chess Federation (MCF) president Johnny "Ted" Gaudia and National Master Rody Brabit in honor of Marikina City Mayor Marides Carlos Fernando. In the junior division, Ria Elena A. Smith 4.5, points to bring home the title. RM Marlon Bernardino, contributor

INTEGRATED COMPUTER SYSTEMS, INC.

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

CURRENCIES

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

Stocks at 9 1/2-year high

SHARE PRICES CLIMBED TO 9-percent higher yesterday, with fund managers buying up blue chips and window dressing.

The composite index rose 71.14 points to 3,881.83, its highest level in nearly nine and a half years, after nosing between 3,860.39 and 3,886.47.

SPOKES B3

11-month BOP surplus hits $3.14B

$17-M deficit posted in Nov. due to debt prepayments

By Doris C. Dumlao

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SIX MONTHS, THE PHILIPPINES incurred a balance-of-payments (BOP) shortfall of $17 million in November as the public sector took advantage of strong dollar inflows and an appreciating peso to pay foreign debts ahead of maturity.

Based on a Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas report released yesterday, the country's BOP swung to a deficit in November from a surplus of $116 million in October, but the windfall in earlier months still resulted in a cumulative surplus of $3.14 billion for the 11-month period.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the local economy and the rest of the world.

Any transaction that gives rise to a payment by a Filipino resident like importation or debt servicing is a deficit item in the BOP while any that gives rise to a receipt like borrowing, export or inward remittance is a surplus item.

"The small BOP deficit in November was due to the debt prepayments," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

It was the third monthly BOP deficit recorded by the Philippines so far this year. The last one was recorded a month ago in May at $56 million, following a deficit of $277 million in April.

But the month's deficit was much smaller than the $170-million shortfall in November last year.

On a cumulative basis, the 11-month surplus of $3.14 billion was also much better than the surplus of $2.13 billion in the same period last year.

The country would have sustained a surplus last month if not for debt prepayments made by the BSP and the national government.

This November, the BSP alone prepayment $203 million in loans and notes originally maturing in 2008 and 2010.

The national government also bought back during the period $145 million worth of Brady bonds with various maturities from 2007 to 2030, following the same exit pursued by Latin American countries that refunded loans (mostly) to Mexico, Brazil and Colombia.

Some $411 million of these Brady bonds have retired ahead of maturity on June.

The Brady bonds were named after Nicholas Brady, the US treasury chief during the term of President Ronald Reagan, who proposed the issuance of these bonds to help heavily indebted countries like the Philippines restructure their commercial

• MONTH BOP, B2

SETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

BIR prods tax delinquents

By Michelle V. Rarus

CHECKING UP WITH ITS TAX-COLLECTION target for 2006, the Bureau of Internal Revenue has urged tax delinquent taxpayers to avail themselves of the revenue agency's compromise program before the year ends.

Boy Aurelio Tandoc, president of the BIR's Association of Chief Revenue Officers of the Philippines (Acrophil), said in a statement that these programs would allow taxpayers to clean their records before 2007 begins.

The BIR is officially tasked to collect P675.4 billion to meet this year, about 25 percent higher than its previous year's collection.

The BIR, however, set its own target of only P600 billion, meaning that taxes on government securities should not be part of its goal. The BIR argued

BIR/PCGG B2

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- Seaoil cuts price of ethanol blended gas / B 4

Banks' bad loans drop to 8-yr low

NPL ratio hit 7.16% in Oct., BSP reports

By Doris C. Dantiso

THE BAD LOAN RATIO OF COMmercial banks dropped to a seven-eight-year low of 7.16 percent at the end of October from 7.43 percent as of end-September, as the growth in loan portfolio outpaced the expansion of soured assets, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday.

Of the banking system's total non-performing loans, including those of thrift banks, about 9 percent represented past due credit card receivables while about 3.8 percent were past due auto loans.

Based on the latest BSP report, the banking industry's credit card receivables that have been past due accounted for 19.2 percent of total plastic-based receivables, while past due auto loans accounted for 5 percent of total vehicle loans as of end-September, relatively steady from their respective ratios of 19.1 percent and 5.04 percent at end-June.

"The marginal increase in ratio from last quarter was driven by the relatively faster reduction of credit card receivables coming past due at 1 percent compared with the 4 percent growth rate in total credit card receivables," a BSP report said.

In general, the banking system's stock of bad loans has fallen to its lowest level in eight years. It peaked at P1.61 percent in October 2001. The drawdown was aided by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) law that allowed banks to get rid of over P130 billion in bad assets.

The SPV Law worked some of the tonic and reduced but notably collected to the debt or transfer of assets. It scrapped the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and expanded value added tax, and reduced registration and transfer fees by 50 percent. Congress has passed a law extending its effectivity for two more years.

As of end-October, the BSP said commercial banks' NPLs declined by 8.43 percent, while total loan portfolio went up by 3.15 percent. Its peso portion, the bank's NPLs then amounted to P162.2 billion as against the total loan portfolio of P1.979 billion.

Also, real and other properties acquired (net) as a ratio of gross assets slid by 0.08 percentage points to 4.39 percent from 4.46 percent last month as growth in gross assets overwhelmed the increase in the stock of the assets.

Thus, the industry's non-performing assets as a ratio to total assets likewise narrowed by 0.18 percentage point to 7.1 percent from 7.48 percent last month, driven by the increase in total assets.

Land me your ear

FOR THE RECORD, THE GOVernment of Quezon City is giving way to the "appeal" of homeowners' associations contesting the P2 billion project of Federal Land.

The company is putting up a high-rise condominium, called Capitol Tower, on E. Rodriguez St. Avenue, a few kilometers from St. Luke's Medical Center.

But residents of Mariquinitary Plain (a project of Ayala Land, which is planning to do the expansion) protest, complained to the Quezon City government against the Federal Land project.

They claimed that the project would add strain to the infrastructure in the area, particularly traffic, water supply and sewerage.

Thus they are asking the city government to force Federal Land to change its design, perhaps even downscale the whole project.

But the question before the city council is, how can people sell others what is its own their property?

Now, according to our spies in city hall, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte, plus most of the councilors, already wanted to approve the project.

But because of the so-called "concerns" aired, supposedly by residents of Montgomery Place, city hall is heading down an easy to public hearings first.

Still, word has it that the city council also intends to look at the economics of the real-estate project, particularly the high property tax payments that it can generate.

The son of Mayor Manila is going for high-rise structures, which brings up the issue of real estate, which in turn means higher income for the local government.

Majority of the members of the Quezon City council, according to my spy, feel that the city cannot afford to go against such a trend.

It only for that, the next issue is the city council wants to go with Federal Land. The project just wants the company to address the concerns of residents in the area.

In fact, the city government has already granted permits for high-rise structures in the SM group, which built a high-rise condominium in Quezon City.

And so, if the city council do take the same thing to Federal Land, it may be treating soon soon.

Moreover, in the development business for the past 30 years or so, Federal Land has a good track record in high-rise development.

For instance, it converted a blighted GSIS area into Salcedo Village in Quezon City into a high-rise compound. The company even solved the flooding problem in the area.

It is doubtful that the company will do anything to ruin its reputation.

* * *

For all government employees—the more than one million of you who are found to be comic members of the GSIS—the Pasig City Regional Trial Court has a little Christmas gift.

The court just ruled that the GSIS should give up P1.12 billion of your pension fund—just like that!

The matter is one of garnishment. It authorized the sheriff of Pasig City, a certain Clemencijano Rabello Jr., to get the GSIS fund amounting to P1.12 billion deposited in certain banks.

The money will then go to a certain Edwin Espinosa claiming to own a previous equivalent amount to 9 cows, after she took over from her late husband, Eduardo Espinosa, who in turn only took over from the original petitioner, namely Jose Tolentin and Soledad Ramos. Whew!

Anyway, the GSIS management of course went straight to the Supreme Court to try to block the RTC cobbs ... ous, ruling.

The Supreme Court already ruled on exactly the same case many years ago.

Many years ago, Jose Tolentin and Soledad Ramos borrowed money from the GSIS. They also forgot to repay their debts.

Instead, the GSIS foreclosed on real estate properties that the two put up as collateral for the loans. Guess what, the GSIS foreclosed the WRONG properties.

The two borrowers then sued the GSIS, asking for the return of P1 billion that the GSIS foreclosed by mistake. The Supreme Court then ordered the GSIS to return the 16 lots. (In the GSIS could also just pay for the lots.

And so, to follow the Supreme Court order, GSIS started to give back the lots to the claimant, who for some reason became Eduardo Santiago and, subsequently, his wife Natacha.

In the process, the GSIS already returned 63 lots, out of the 78 lots that it foreclosed.

And here's a surprise. The Court of Appeals, which by the way is also deeply involved in the case by some mysterious fashion, ruled that the GSIS should just pay for the lots. As a bonus, the CA ordered the Pasig RTC to execute its ruling right away.

Even before the value of the property could be determined. Scary!

Well, the CA ruled that, while the Pasig RTC ruled to find out the market value of the lots, the GSIS should just give the claimants only P400 million, for starters.

Anyway, the GSIS surely questioned the CA ruling, arguing that the GSIS already returned 63 lots, which should therefore be excluded from the payments.

While the GSIS was busy fighting the CA, lo and behold, the Pasig RTC issued the garnishment of some P1.12 billion of GSIS funds deposited in banks.

Question: Where is the cut for the Spurs of P1.12 billion come from? Well, only heaven knows! And perhaps the judge in the case!

* * *

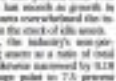
Every first Friday of the month at the Bold Gym car park at the Ayala Center (along Ayala Avenue), and every third Friday at the Alabang Town Center, you will find the WASTE TRADING BASKETS!

There you can trade scrap papers for new paper or used ink cartridges for new ones, and sell used books, used appliances (and broken appliances) and used lead acid batteries, and even for cash (cash warn: as PET plastic bottles and other plastics, aluminum and tin cans, and scrap glass.

Scrap sellers are also provided for junk cellular phones and their batteries, plus name scrap items.

It is all part of the "recycling" movement.

On Holiday



Ben Navarro

DEAR READERS: I DO NOT write an article this week because I am still unwell. I shall be on vacation next week as my doctor wants me to be on Wednesday, Jan 2.

It will be another fabulous article about our city ahead.

The PSE has decided to add my blood pressure to the PSEI30 as it will breach 3,000 next week.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

₱900M eyed for SM mall in Bacolod

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC. OF Henry Sy—one of the richest men in the world, according to Forbes Magazine—will be spending roughly P900 million for its 20th mall in Bacolod in March.

The new mall will span a total area of 80,000 square meters, sources said.

Word that the group remains bullish on Iloilo the retail market will fuel up the next week, SM Prime earlier said it would take to 2007 budget for new malls and land acquisition in between P6 and P7 billion.

Prime is in launch of Mall of Asia, the country's largest mall, probably Bacolod. The group will spend an average of P6 billion a year for new malls.

Apart from the mall in Bacolod City, SM retail establishments are also being constructed in Taytay town and Mandaluyong City both in Metro Manila. The projects are being financed with a combination of borrowings and internally generated cash.

Last May, SM Prime has opened five malls: SM Lipa in Batangas, SM City Sta. Rosa, SM City Clark, SM Mall of Asia and SM Supercenter Pasig. The new malls would bring SM Prime's retail malls to 27. The malls have increased parallel the company's gross floor area to 3.6 million square meters.

In a related development, SM Investments Corp., which controls 53 percent of SM Prime, said it has increased its urban development project at the Manila Bay where its biggest mall is located.

SMIC has spent P2 billion on infrastructure in the 44-hectare area, and will spend some P3.5 billion for the development of its business process outsourcing, locally dubbed Digital-com Center and SMX Convention Center. Both projects will be completed by the third quarter next year.

SM Prime in the urban land has spent P7 billion for its Mall of Asia development.

SM Bay City is a 60-hectare lot which has been earmarked for developments into a business district. It is home to the world's third largest mall, the SM Mall of Asia, and corporate offices of SM Investments and its subsidiaries.

In addition to the mall, SM Bay City will see the development of hotels, office towers and convention center, a sports arena, a row of hotels facing the bay, and a commercial ferry terminal.

11-month BOP surplus hits $3.14B

From page B1

bank debt starting in the 1980s.

But despite the small BOP deficit in November, the country's gross international reserves during the period climbed to a new record of $22.49 billion.

The GIR build up, a key indicator of a country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy, remains of the BSP's great hedge against budget and current account deficits, foreign investment and capital drawing rights from multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund.

The strengthening of the peso against the dollar in the last few months alongside the bullish regional currency market has likewise given the BSP the opportunity to further build up its reserves while smoothening excess market volatility.

From page B1

grants, with the deadline for applications on Dec. 22, the BIR waives all penalties, including surcharges and interest, on unpaid taxes so long as the concerned taxpayer voluntary pays the basic unpaid taxes. The BIR will liberalize drop pending civil court cases against tax delinquents who will apply.

BIR prods tax delinquents

that the reduction in the volume of monetary bills and bonds issued by the government intended to limit the inflationary effects of taxes on government securities, and the revenue agency should therefore not be liable for it.

As of end-October, the BIR's tax collection stood at P513.8 billion. This was about P30 billion short of its 10-month goal. But the BIR said its latest collection figures brought it up to 84 percent target of P600 billion.

Sandoz said the compromise programs that were still ongoing included the Abatement program and the Improved Voluntary Assessment Program (IVAP).

Under the Abatement program, the BIR will grant the taxpayer a reduction in the penalties, while the IVAP will allow taxpayers to pay their basic tax liabilities without penalties.

Stocks . . .

From page B1

It was the index's best finish since 118 1, 1997, when it settled at 2,968.30.

The broader all-share index rose 13.49 points or 1.73% to 1,776.36.

There were 77 gainers and 34 losers with 38 unchanged. A total of 5, 12 billion shares worth P3.75 billion changed hands.

Dealers said investment was also solidified by Wall Street's extended advance on Friday and President Gloria Arroyo's move to abandon her divisive plan to amend the constitution. The move has helped ease political tensions.

"This could be part of the Santa Clause rally that the market usually goes through before the year ends," said Asian del Castillo of First Grade Holdings. AFP

ADVICE TO BSP

Go slow on interest rate cut

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS HAS been urged to avoid swift cuts in its key policy rates to lessen volatility pressures on the peso to be caused by the coming elections.

Regional financial giant Development Bank of Singapore said in an assessment of the Philippines that a substantial and immediate rate cut by the BSP next year might aggravate possible capital flight resulting from an election-related environment.

A reduction in the local interest rate narrows its gap with US interest rates. A narrow differential and perception of increased risks in markets like the Philippines encourage investors to transfer investments.

DBS suggested that should the BSP cut its interest rate next year from the current 7.5 percent, it should be paced with that of the US Fed's possible rate cut.

"Rate cuts by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) may create some discomfort about narrowing the peso's spread advantage over the US dollar," DBS said. "[But] BSP rate cuts should not undermine the peso if they are paced with the US rate easing we expect in the first half of 2007," DBS added.

The BSP retained its 7.5-percent overnight borrowing rate to the latest meeting of the policy-making Monetary Board last month, although it implemented a forex reform wherein deposits with the BSP in excess of threshold levels get lower interest rates.

While the BSP did not reduce its key policy rate outright, some analysts expect the monetary authority to do so next year amid a continued decline in inflation. Consumer prices rose by only 4.7 percent in November from a year ago, slowing down from 5.4 percent the previous month.

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Seaoil cuts price of ethanol blended gas by ₱0.50/liter

By Abigail L. Ho

SEAOIL PETROLEUM CORP. slashed the pump price of its ethanol-blended gasoline by 50 centavos a liter effective Dec. 18.

"In a step of celebrating the enactment of the Biofuels Law, Seaoil is reducing the price of Seaoil E10 by 50 centavos per liter. This makes Seaoil E10 not only the cheapest fuel, but also the cheapest fuel in the land," Seaoil president Glenn Yu said in a statement.

Seaoil, considered the pioneer in selling gasoline blended with 10 percent ethanol directly from its service stations' pumps, started offering the alternative fuel in August last year.

Seaoil now offers E10 in all of its 100 stations nationwide.

The passage of the Biofuels Act of 2006 also prompted Seaoil to firm up plans to put up its own 100,000-liter-a-day ethanol plant.

In an earlier interview, Yu said the passage of the bill was the catalyst that the oil firm was waiting for before shelling a more ambitious plan for the establishment of its own ethanol refinery.

With the bill now signed into law, he said the timing was right to set that plan into motion.

The plan was contingent on the passage of the Biofuels Bill into law, which includes a market for ethanol-blended gasoline.

Under the Biofuels Act of 2006,

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NISSAN MOTOR PHILIPPINES, INC.

FirstGen to expand Pantabangan-Masiway generation capacity

FIRST GEN HYDRO POWER CORP. (FGHPC), the Power Corp. is planning to expand the capacity of the 132-megawatt Pantabangan-Masiway hydropower complex by 100 MW, the company is now planning to expand the plants by 120 MW.

Bernt Gustavsen, vice chairman and chief executive of parent firm First Gen Corp., said the first 35-MW upgrade of the facility's existing units should come on stream by mid-2008, while the next 35-MW upgrade would be done by mid-2009.

These would join the company between $80 million and $85 million. Executive said in an interview with reporters yesterday.

If things go well with the upgrade, he said, the company would undertake an $80-million expansion project that would add another 65 MW unit to the Pantabangan plant and another 35-MW unit in the Masiway facility.

He said these new units should come on stream by mid-2013.

"The Pantabangan-Masiway hydroelectric complex could be expanded provided there is enough water. Right now, water levels are relatively high and could even increase, especially as Casecnan is planning to increase the (installed) of water to the Pantabangan dam," he said.

He said the company had raised sufficient funds, on a bond issue that generated $90 million and Piso Time's initial public offering earlier this year, for the expansion.

"In addition, there are internally generated funds that every year add to our coffers," he said.

First Gen acquired the Pantabangan-Masiway power package from the government through a bidding for $129 million. It bid beyond that of sole competitor SN Aboitiz Power Inc., which offered $111 million. Abigail L. Ho

NTC starts study on number portability

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission has created a team to study how cellular phone subscribers can switch networks without having to change their numbers.

This means a subscriber of Smart, Globe, Talk 'n' Text, Touch Mobile or Sun Cellular will no longer have to buy a new SIM card from his new carrier.

According to an NTC memorandum order, the technical working group was created on Nov. 27 "pursuant to the Public Telecommunications Policy Act of 1995 (R.A. No. 7925)."

Such a measure would be a boon to the 40 million cellular phone subscribers in the Philippines.

"Whichever telco offers the best services to consumers will benefit from the change," NTC commissioner Ces Soto author/section department director Edgardo Cabarios said in an interview.

Cabarios heads the five-member technical working group (TWG) in charge of the number portability study.

The TWG also includes an engineer from the NTC and one representative each from the Philippine Electronics and Telecommunications Federation (Peaf), Philippine Association of Private Telephone Companies and Philippine Chamber of Telecommunications Operators Inc.

Cabarios said the study might take two to three months. The TWG will submit its recommendations to the NTC commissioners, soon led by Abraham Abcarian. The NTC, in turn, will hold public consultations before finalizing its rules on the number portability process.

Meralco capital hike, cash dividend OKd

THE BOARD OF LOPEZ-led Manila Electric Co. has approved the increase in the authorized capital stock to P17.5 billion from the current P13.4 billion.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Meralco vice president and assistant corporate secretary Gil San Diego said the board likewise approved the declaration of a P3-per-share cash dividend to common stockholders as of Jan. 10, 2007.

The dividend pay-out would take place on Feb. 5, 2007, he said.

He added that the board would also present to stockholders for approval a stock dividend equivalent to 10 percent of the company's outstanding common capital stock.

"But the increase in the authorized capital stock and stock dividend will be subject to the ratification/approval by the stockholders and the Securities and Exchange Commission. The record date for the stock dividend will be set only after the necessary approvals have been obtained," the disclosure stated.

Meralco recently issued P7.2 billion worth of fixed-rate and floating-rate corporate notes, the proceeds from which would be used to refinance its existing short-term obligation and fund its working capital requirements. Abigail L. Ho

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LIFESTYLE

Alice Chan-Sanvi-Formoso

IN THIS ISSUE
Characters you meet in the gym /D4

When breathing is fun, the living is easy

By Lynet A. Villacilis
Photos by Rene Rosco

ALL IT TAKES TO PULL US OUT OF A FRAZZLED DAY in the newsroom is an invitation. So when the invitation rallied for us "to experience the Art of Living (AOL)" in six days, it was enough reason to drop everything.

There were 40 other kindred spirits in the Shakti Dhargri La hotel venue who thought it was worth spending some 20 hours in the zendo.

Like lesser blind lemmers Aimee Lizares who did not know what to expect, my knowledge of AOL was limited to the coincidence that its founder, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, was a namesake of the renowned Indian sitar player.

Some, like Sofia—a comely lady who does not look the sixty-something she is—expected to get something out of a well-lived life. Others, much younger, were expecting to have the same life-changing experience their friends gushed about.

Putting a smile

Like lonesome children on their first day of school, we sat on the white dhurra-covered carpet to be enlightened on universal Vedic wisdom by a sun-to-dun lady garbed in an Indian sari with a caption that read "Ruth."

She assured skeptics that: "The organization is not important, it is the individual that is. Our aim is to put a smile in every heart."

Adjusted to the needs of modern life by its 59-year-old founder based in Bangalore, India, AOL courses are offered worldwide as an experiential program designed to develop the full potential of life. It is anchored on the premise that it is in our nature to be happy, truthful and at peace.

Each one will have to seek that out for himself/herself, its the AOL founder says: "There is no proxy walking [on the path]."

Best choice

True to the eternity tradition, when a student is ready, a teacher comes to impart what instructional manuals cannot do. The teacher recommended things to make us the best choices of achieving "what you came here for."

At first, Abigail, in his 20s, balked at no caffeine, no smoking and going vegetarian for six days. But his passion for learning outweighed his desire for mundane pleasures.

What was harder for some people, because of the nature of their work, was to avoid sweet, violence and television.

Easy and relaxing

When Tita told her family she would be coming home late for the next five days because of her evening class, they could not understand why the Iloilo Queens City lodge had to travel to Makati "just to learn how to breathe."

As days passed, what made the course easy and relaxing were exercises to get the body in a relaxed mood. The series of breathing exercises freed the body and mind of negative emotions and toxic tensions that caused mental constipation. Once the mind was free and relaxed, the body followed.

On day three, Abigail found out he could easily glide into the relaxation zone with a body made light by a vegetarian diet without caffeine and nicotine. He also noticed a heightened visual sense, making colors brighter.

By day five, Helen, an insomniac, was surprised to have been able to sleep well most pills for the first time.

SYDNEY 62

AOL volunteer Katherine Tan goes through a yoga stretching exercise to prime the body for rhythmic breathing.

FIRST of three yoga breathing postures begins with hands on hips, taking in eight cycles of 4-4-4 Exhale-hold-inhale-hold rhythmic breathing to fill up the lower part of the lungs.

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Call abroad for less than a local call.*

sun CELLULAR

MATCHES Iza Gerva, Susan Jarero, Cindy Cruz, Mona Tamson and Annel Pope

MALOU Fernandez, Marissa Concepcion, Marivic Alvarez, and Celestine Tenorio

TRISHA Briones, agatea Helen Ong and Eve Cossa, and Mia Tendencing-Padilla

CESAR Gaupo with Agnes Hallemina, Fe Rodrigues and Celestin Lorenzo

YESSA Valdez with Chantal Jessica Buenviaje

LEICA and Amanda Carpo, Marita Bautista and Jasmine Coronel

MAHILUM Fernandez, Divine Sarmiento and Noel dela Merced

GAUPO Shoes president Ervinia Teng and marketing director Eric Tengviek Glenn Zokoto

SEXY Dandy Tiozon and Ruel Maglalang

Gaupo's sole-baring show

TOP model Rina Manampat Samson

ANGEL Aquino

PINOY Amador attended Marie Claire's first anniversary party

HAVE IT TO CREATIVE GENIUS CESAR Gaupo, poloygon, to organize a super stylish presentation like the unveiling of his new Gaupo Shoe Couture collection.

Couture Manille's beautiful people and fashionable women gathered at The Peninsula Manila Conservatory for the fabulous event, against simple black drapes, human mannequins in glamorous outfits showed Gaupo's masterful creations, dubbings—stunning shoes from the designer's holiday collection that were natural and sophisticated.

Gaupo Shoes' cyber store marketing director Ana Teng and brilliant president Ervinia Teng hosted the affair, together with the jubilant Gaupo. Elegant women—all of whom contributed to Gaupo's intimate understanding of women—were too visible, polyggon.

There were Peninsula Manila's well-loved general manager Astrid Batchelor; adorable and attractive Bimba Tinio; designers Mike de la Rosa, Tendeli Nacuna, Bernie Lantion, Arnel Pupa and Rick Yupangco with chic Asana Manahan; Pando Alcuaz with wife, television personality Suzy Entrata; stylish stores Jane Lotus and Amanda Carpo; style random Cris Albert and Anna Bitong of Vis, tastefil Plus so many others too fashionable to mention, dubbings.

Gaupo has definitely moved into world-class shoe couture, with styles that are gorgeously executed by the world's women. The 2007 Gaupo Shoes Resort collection is available at the showroom at the basement of The Peninsula Manila. Per individual custom fitting, call brand manager Terry Bolton at 8872888 loc 568.

Women power

For the past year, Marie Claire magazine has been celebrating the modern Filipina woman: stylish, independent and open-minded, someone who knows what she wants.

To celebrate its first anniversary, the magazine chose 30 stunning women who not only inspired others by excelling in their fields, but also embodied substance and style.

Marie Claire's 30 Women of the World were honored in an anniversary party at the Ayala Museum, Greenbelt 4.

Editor and Marie Claire editor in chief Alyssa Bunn presented the award to the 30 women.

Angel Aquino, 33, model and multi-awarded actress has been in show business for 10 years.

Lucky Cruz-Sahlee, 43, is a broadcast journalist who has been in the business for over 20 years.

OFFICE FORE Association of the Philippines chair Cora Cortes and president Belinda Pascual; Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan; Philippine Chamber of Pharmaceutical Industry's Willy Fabros, and Michael de la Cruz

CHAIR of Pascualcos Dr. Abraham Pascual with the owners of Mercury Drug Corp., Vivian Que Azcona and Marlene Que

PASCUALLAB'S Manuel Salazar, Mercury Drug's Jolinis Concepcion, Pascualab's Ailey Rivera, BFAD director Letecia Gutierrez, Dr. Abraham Pascual and Betty Hondo and Basilio Gil Bed Espiritu

THE BEAUTIFUL pack: Sylvia Pascual, Bombon and Jay Tambunting, Pinky Aragon, Mari Pascual and Kinny Tales

DR. JOSE Reyes, Dr. Alfonso Tan Reyes and beauty queen Evangeline Pascual

LIA Andaman Yu and Ruian Cruz

MARIE Claire's 30 Women of the World

LUCY Torres-Gomez with Kate Torralba

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hegen using **Ricoh** GX200 digital camera

Lizzie Zobel, 45, is a children's literary and family-planning advocate through Friendly Care and Ka Ade Siokai Rosales cause.

Laura Verallo de Bretaña, 36, an engineer, is chief executive officer of VMV Hypoallergenics, the first Filipino hypoallergenic "cosmoceutical" company.

Gaby-de la Merced, 29, is one of only two women drivers competing in the Asian Formula 3 series.

At Ann Bisagad, 36, is a photographer/model.

Willy Villanueva-Ong, 55, is an advertising executive.

Wu Elena Bautista, 37, is former head of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board.

Anna Leah Sarabia, 32, is executive director of the Women's Media Circle and president of the Kalusugan Foundation for women against violence.

Nora Daza, 78, culinary expert, was host of the television show "Cooking It Up with Nora."

Designer Rajo Torralba provided the entertainment for the party, with his spunky Pinoy Double White and Mini Hotwives.

"Marie Claire magazine is the only magazine that actively challenges its readers to become more beautiful, smarter and more sexual," explained Myrna L. Jose who, she said, is a polonggoan.

Gorgeous Southern beauty Lacy Barnes-Gannon graced the scene of the Mercedes Marie Claire issue.

68 years

These days, polonggoan, we are seeing more and more of Filipino power and passion through our competitors' outstanding international achievements. The 60th anniversary of Filipino-owned pharmaceutical company Pascual Laboratories Inc. (Pascualab), dubbings, was another reason for the nation to be proud.

The milestone was celebrated at a lab general revue in the Rizal Ballroom of the Makati Shangri-La where top, along with Pascualab's industry partners, suppliers and other invitees, joined in recognizing the magnitude of the company's accomplishments that has made it a national gem.

The entire Pascual clan was present and accounted for, polonggoy, including her celebrity members Lynn Chang-Pascual and Ivanny Chua-Pascual.

As the lavishly decorated ballroom, the awesome visions of the Ambassadors of Light had us mesmerized as we enjoyed our superbly prepared dinner. A unique multimedia show followed and a truly special audio-visual presentation that underscored Pascual's commitment to its mission over an impressive span of six decades. It ended with the unveiling of the company's special 60th logo.

What a delight it was to hear Pascualab chair Dr. Abraham Pascual share personal stories about his parents, stressing their "dedication and faith in building a company whose main objective is to provide quality medicines that are affordable to every Filipino." Tons of VIPs, like Bureau of Food and Drugs director Leticia Barbara Rubistosa, who gave the keynote speech, recognized Pascualab's invaluable contributions to the nation.

The event was hosted by TV personalities Marc Nelson and Liz Andaman. It featured performances by no less than world-class Filipino artists Robert Seña and Inay Alvarez, who sang, in diwata, with tremendous heart and energy, polonggoan.

Molested by a spirit

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime T. Licauco

MABEL (NOT HER REAL NAME). A woman in her 20s, has been sexually molested by an unseen spirit for a couple of years now. It started when she was in fourth-year high school.

She recalled the first time it happened. "It was Sunday, around 10 or 11 a.m. I was sleeping in my room when, all of a sudden, something heavy was on top of me. I could not move any part of my body or open my eyes; I could feel this whole body on top of me and I heard him whisper in my ear, 'Mahal kita.' I could feel his breath on my face.

"After a few seconds, I realized in my mind and told her what happened. She called my aunt who did a ritual called tawas. Afterward, my aunt called and told my mom that someone was performing an evil spirit on me.

"The second time it happened was Dec. 25 last year. We just finished eating Noche Buena and everyone decided to take a rest. My sister's cell phone started to ring at around 3:30 a.m. Then I felt someone was watching me.

"In fact, I sensed that one of them can do things, but I've experienced a lot more, I really need help!"

Details needed

Yes, you need immediate help. Please call my office at 8924000 or 8107205, or 0906-3501796. There are several details I need to get from you so I can figure out the best strategy to handle your case.

There are multifaceted spirits who seek a liking for you and several are sexually enchanting you, not just one! Such an entity is called succubus (plural is incubi). They are malevolent and sexually starved spirits preying usually on innocent young maidens like you.

During the Medieval Era, there were many reported cases of incubi molestations of women. Even Catholic nuns living in cloistered were victimized by these sexual acts. Exorcisms had to be performed on them.

Ordinary blessings by priests will not get rid of incubi. You will need somebody trained for this purpose. There are exorcism priests. These are those with the power and authority to fight these evil spirits.

Lay people who are clairvoyants and who have undergone training in spiritual battles can also help victims of sexual molestations by spirits.

Demonic

It is not true that somebody alive was performing an orgasm on you. An incubus is not a living person. It is a demonic spirit.

Although it is no guarantee, you should avoid sleeping alone and always have the lights on when you sleep.

You should also create a protective object in your body, like the St. Benedict's medal that's been empowered or blessed in the proper ritual by a Benedictine priest authorized to do so. Otherwise, it has no power to prevent you from the demonic possessions or molestations.

Another thing you can do pending exorcism of these demons is to learn more about the spirit world so you can protect yourself from negative spirits. Be avidders, read my books or attend my seminars so you will learn how to deal with your psychic gifts.

You are a sensitive and open channel. That's why such earthbound spirits can affect you. They do this while you are asleep or about to sleep because that's the time when your brain waves go down to the Theta and Delta levels where they can reach you.

At the Beta levels or the waking state of your brain, spirits cannot touch you because you are on a different wave length. That's why the first line of defense when you sense the presence of spirits is to jump up and down, or clap your hands loudly so that your brain waves will return to the faster frequency of the Beta rhythm. This usually works.

Listen to my Sunday radio program 6-8 p.m. on dzBM, 630 kHz, 400 km) Art In Creative Mind Development Institute, call 8187243, 8924000 or 0906-3501799.

When breathing is fun, the living is easy

From page C1

By day six, we were gazing into one another's eyes, purposefully to relate, to bond, we ended up laughing and giggling at what we saw as mirrors of ourselves.

Affirmation

Did the students take to heart the Art of Living's basic premise for achieving a stress-free life at the end of the course?

If only we can affirm that all human beings are capable of living a healthy happy life, free from stress, fears and anxieties. If only we can grasp that it is the birthright of all living beings to live life with energy, full of enthusiasm, caring and love.

If only with a cultivated positive attitude borne out of the skills taught during the course, we can transform our world and choose to live and find purpose in life, then we would have lived the Art of Living.

Transformation

Seven years ago, Ruth Kuok was content with her life in Hong Kong until she received a remarkable transformation in her friend who took the Art of Living course.

"For two years, this friend begged me to do the course. If only to make her stop, I took it."

Ruth says the six-day course was not a dramatic transformation for her but: "as I went into more and more practice, I began to sense a sense of wellbeing. I have never experienced before."

She changed from being a person who kept to herself to someone who taught others.

SMILE of success. The 45 people from different backgrounds took fulfilled as the end of a six-day Art of Living course taught by Hong Kong ACE's Ruth Kuok.

SECOND cycle: breathing posture brings hands to the chest to fill up the middle part of the lungs with right cycle of rhythmic inhalation-exhalation.

FINAL cycle: breathing posture with hands on upper back fills up the upper part of the lungs with the cycle of rhythmic inhalation-exhalation.

"When my two teenagers who were in that difficult stage began enjoying having me, I knew that the course opened up a whole new dimension for me. My family was the primary beneficiary."

Voluntary service

Ruth and others in the foundation are volunteers who render service for free. Enrollment proceeds are used by the local chapter for various humanitarian projects.

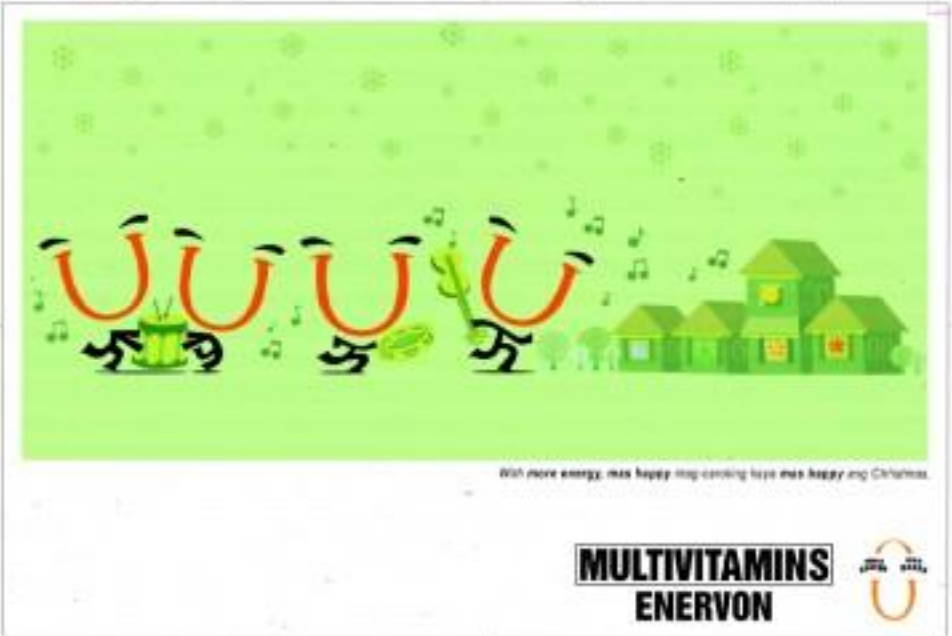
Something in the practice of breathing and meditation inspires humanitarian service. "Responsibility is joyful and empowering," volunteers Sarmenia Bargani and Ballesteros Tan said. During the course, they were organizing disaster relief for Bicol.

The foundation estimates that six million people across the globe have taken the Art of Living course.

Today, the Art of Living Foundation is the largest volunteer network offering inspirational programs in 144 countries to people of varied backgrounds... from professionals to distressed village children to prisoners. It has a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

The next Art of Living (Part 1) course is 7-10 p.m., Jan. 15-20, Makati "Sacred Spirit Avenue. Call Nemesia Bargani at 0917 7931930 or Denise Caldron at 0916 3319333.

E-mail the author at talkwithus@inquirer.com.ph



Reward yourself this season by doing something good for you and you alone

Gifts of health, beauty and wellness

GIFT-GIVING HAS ALWAYS BEEN A challenge to many. It is often more confusing and stressful during the yuletide season.

So you finalise your holiday gift list, think about two things you need to overlook:

1. Your name at the top of the list and

2. Health as a gift option, if not a priority.

Healthy choices

Your food choices should have the health of the receiver in mind. Imagine how touched a person would be to receive a note saying "because I care about your health..." Consider sending the following:

■ Organic raw (all-varieties from the depot of Chomsons Kalings, from the famous raw testament).

■ Fruits and vegetables of every imaginable color, size and shape, as well as organic chicken, for Christmas baskets. Call Mary Berlin de Towers at 8099833, 7294882 or 0917-987 8899 visit www.organic.ph.

■ Virgin coconut oil—Not all VCO is good. If you are familiar with the manufacturer, then buy it. As the only oil that contains lauric acid, VCO tops the list as a health booster when taken internally. Just 1-2 tablespoons a day can improve the quality of your life. It's antiviral/bacterial/microbial properties are incomparable. A must buy for the health-conscious.

Brenda's virgin Splash (in flavored varieties like orange, strawberry) or, for those who prefer it plain. Dona Pirol, Pio Santos (available at SM).

If it's good for you, in the inside, it must be good on the outside.

Apply liberally coconut, VCO perfume virgin coco oil, on your hair and body—available at Wanema Rose Pharmacy. Try YCO-enriched soaps like Oil & Herbs with pineapple and papaya.

Inside Out
Cary Quirino

■ Vitamins—Most people are not in the habit of taking a multivitamin/mineral supplement. It might be a good time to start. If you are a one-a-day pill popper, consider Pharmaton. Its newest formulation has an excellent combination of ginseng, brain booster and ginseng for energy/immune system building. At Mercury Drug stores.

Extra: Vitamin C fortification should include sodium ascorbate (Sisco C). It's non-acidic nature will not cause the formation of kidney stones often taken in mega-doses. Vitamin C is considered a star in the firmament of health. Call Rosemay Salupan at 7239135/7237268.

■ Herbal wonder—Red ginseng, harvested in the mountains of Korea, has long been considered as health tonic by pharmacological societies can help combat cancer, hypertension, hepatitis, diabetes mellitus and stress, among others. Saponins are found highest in red ginseng, world countries' products by calling the exclusive distributors, Lloyds Korean Ginseng, cell/sms 0917/332/0928/9519508.

■ Cell food—Optimum health requires optimum health food. Supercharging the living engine of digestion, PEP—made from organic rice aronas through a unique process exclusively patented by Nutrilite—comes in pre-digested powder form.

When mixed with warm water and taken on a less-before meals, nullifies 20 minutes its energy-giving properties directly fuel your cells. Recommends from people with health challenges (like diabetes, low libido, ADD/ADHD, poor complexion) have been impressive. Call: Hans Pelaston, 8921-3025/705.

Wellness wonders

If the wild or the great outdoors beckons you to leave the asphalt jungle behind, there are several sights to visit that will soothe your senses.

■ A verdant park like the La Mesa Park and Watershed is just in Metro Manila's outskirts. Here's a picnic with the family. Call 931 5555.

■ Step into a natural sanctorum and take in unpolluted clean air to clear your lungs. Photo like Hidden Valley Springs (Montalban, Laguna) near the foothills of Mt. Makiling, have to this day remained faithful to Mother Nature. Amid giant antilong trees and the sound and feel of natural pools and natural waterfalls, you will revive your very chilled senses.

Call 8 EMBO4 or 8404122.

■ If you are city-bound and the need for a relaxing break arises you, enjoy a cruise. At Manila Bay cruises are free. Complete your experience of well-being at the newly renovated Sofitel Philippine Plaza (whose natural view of the bay is unobstructed and exclusive. Its spa affords lovers/honeymooners a perfect lazy-window view of the sea from their private cabins. From beauty, massage to detox treatments, the spa is open for well-night. Call 4844401).

Gift yourself

Reward yourself this season by doing something good for you and you alone. Renew your lifestyle and keep wellness foremost in your mind. It's never too late to feel good and look good.

Spiritual horses

Food for the soul can be uplifting and life-giving. Find a charity that needs your time, talent or resources. Think about going to a shelter like Tahay Ni/ces/children Village. Call Sr. Becky Gonopilino at 7750484.

Love and light this yuletide!

Sharapova's edge

MARIA SHARAPOVA, RANKED the top woman tennis player this year, continues to improve her game with the help of the Top Player's D3 system.

The Top Player endorser, who leaves the #3 while, further improved her play until the tournament's expanded season open and increased speed.

The 19 year old Siberian is among a distinguished group of over 75 training top pro players who use the D3 system.

Prince Sports Inc. is a recognized leader in racquet improvement technologies and engineering-based high performance racquet equipment. Prince O3 White racquets are available at Sidey's Sports and Arts, Chris Sports, Royal Sporting House, Olympic Village, JK Sports, Sports House, Sportsmart Duty Free, Gatsons Malls, CH Days, Hoops, Rebel Quality, Les Super Plaza, Adidas, Lupsas Dept., Rooms, Sportsmart, ICM Malls, and other major sporting goods stores nationwide.

Enhance aromatherapy with authentic oils

WITH MOST FILIPINOS learning to enjoy aromatherapy sessions, it is important that they should use only authentic oils that deliver therapeutic benefits.

Spa Essentials' Wellness Oils are 100 percent pure and natural. The oils are specially formulated to eliminate clear body and relieve stresses and strains.

Scientific studies have indicated that unadulterated Wellness oils increase metabolism, speed up healing process, relax muscles and the nervous system, enhance removal of metabolic waste, improve circulation of blood and lymph, relieve mental and physical fatigue, reduce pain, tension and anxiety, make muscles and joints more supple, and improve digestion.

When inhaled, they work on the nervous system and brain by stimulating the nerves used for smelling. When absorbed through the skin, stronger components of the oils are released into the bloodstream to allow its healing powers to help ease discomfort or ailments.

Spa Essentials offers a wide range of Wellness oils for various health needs. Sleep Easy helps achieve a relaxing sleep. Revitalizing enlivens tissues and produces feelings of strength. Stress Relief calms the level mind and body while Sensual stirs the mood for love and romance. Breathe Easy clears sinuses and congestion and aches and pains across the skin and helps relieve tired or sore muscles. Body Cleansing cleanses the body and helps reduce cellulite, congestion and other toxic skin conditions caused by pollution.

Spa Essentials' Wellness Oils are available in essential oil blend, burn spray and massage oil.

Spa Essentials' Wellness Oils are exclusively available at all Watsons stores.

LIFESTYLE

The Philippines ranks ninth among countries with the highest projected incidence of diabetes in the world

Sugar is sweet and that's the problem

By Anne A. Jardaneo

A PANDEMIC THREATENS Asia in the next decade, almost to the tune that it is a highly preventable, non-communicable disease.

Dubbed as the silent killer, the disease strikes younger and younger people each year.

In a recent report, the World Health Organization (WHO) said 171 million people were diagnosed with diabetes in 2000, with more than 30 percent living in Asia. By year 2030, the WHO estimates the number will reach 366 million, forcing people in their productive years (40 and above).

With 5.6 million cases, the Philippines ranks ninth among countries with the largest projected diabetic populations in the world. Many more remain undiagnosed.

The bleak picture was presented during the recent Global Pandemic Media Workshop, sponsored by the drug company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).

"(Diabetes) is not just about sugar. It's also about obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and so much more," said workshop speaker Dr. Pureza Gutierrez, a diplomate and fellow of the Philippine College of Physicians and Philippine Society of Endocrine and Metabolism.

Worldwide, Type 2 (or adult-onset diabetes [when the body does not respond properly to insulin]) is more common, more than 90 percent of cases, than Type 1 (also known as insulin-dependent type when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin).

Organ damage

Both types result in increased concentration of glucose (sugar) which damages many of the body's organs.

Every 10 seconds a person dies of diabetes-related causes. Every 30 seconds a limb is lost to the disease. Some 80 percent of diabetics die from cardiovascular disease.

Diabetes is the leading cause of stroke in Asia; worldwide, at least one in 20 deaths is attributed to the disease. Diabetes can take 10 years off a person's lifespan, according to WHO.

Damage, said Gutierrez, begins in the blood vessels and nerves. Complications include eye disease that can cause blindness, kidney failure, sores that cause foot ulcerations that risk of amputation, heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease.

"Glucose is the most used form of energy. In Type 2 diabetes, if your body cannot utilize glucose as energy, damage to the cells occurs and the risk of complications arises," Gutierrez said.

She said the many reasons for the alarming rise in diabetes incidence were interrelated. Technological breakthroughs, population growth, aging, urbanization, increasing prevalence of obesity and physical inactivity, for instance, result in a sedentary lifestyle.

Interestingly, some people are also at greater risk of developing the disease. But first does not mean people predisposed to diabetes should despair, she said.

Common but preventable

What is Type 2 diabetes, the most common but preventable kind?

The so-called adult-onset diabetes means insulin resistance, when the body fails to respond effectively to the circulating insulin. Gutierrez said since the body thinks it needs more insulin, the pancreas compensates by pro-

SEE PAGE D3

PEBETBOT

BY BILL AMEND

A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABEÑA

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT

PUGAD BABOY

BY PH. JUNIOR

NUTS

BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

LOVEBUNNIES

BY ELIZABETH CHERNEJO

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LUIS GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PARLIAMAN

BIRD MACHINE

BY MARK ABEÑA

MAMBOBOMBO

BY JOHNO TEJIDO

TULOOK

BY PAPI LINO TATUM PALAMBELING

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

	1		9	2		4	6	
	4	2	1			5		
			5		1	8	3	
	8			6			5	
	9	7	4		8			
		1			6	2	8	
	7	6		9	2		1	

Difficulty Level ★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	4	8	1	9	3	7	2	6
7	8	3	2	5	4	6	9	1
9	1	2	6	8	7	4	3	5
4	6	9	8	7	5	3	1	2
8	2	5	3	4	1	9	7	6
3	7	1	9	2	6	5	4	8
6	5	4	7	3	2	1	8	7
1	9	7	4	6	8	2	5	3
2	3	6	5	1	9	8	6	4

A complete line to fill your gift list

FIGHT CHIC with the Adidas Addidas and Fuse lines.

ADIDAS, A LEADING SPORTING brand, makes it easy to get a Christmas gift for everyone with its complete line of apparel.

The Adidas Sport Performance and Adidas Originals lines are likely to have something for everyone.

For the sporty, Adidas offers a complete line of high-quality sports performance products with a variety of high-end technologies such as ClimaCool, ClimaCord and ClimaWarm for heat and moisture management and ProMotion for enhanced power of movement and performance.

Among the sought-after pieces is the footwear and apparel collection of American National Basketball Association superstar Tracy "T-Mac" McGrady and Gilbert Arenas.

For the sporty woman, the Adidas Addidas and Fuse line fuses performance and design seamlessly. It carries five different sports categories including gym, running, yoga, tennis and swimming.

The Adidas Stella McCartney line brings sports performance wear to a new level by providing chic sportswear.

STEP INTO Kyo with the Originals Sleek Series.

The Originals line which is also for the fashionable represents the ethos and passion of Adidas founder Adi Dassler. The line combines sport authenticity with street style and edge. The Originals apparel and footwear are youthful, hip and functional.

It includes the new City Pack series track jackets and shoes which feature different stripe sizes to the world like New York, London and Paris.

The Adidas sport performance is available at all leading malls nationwide. The Adidas Originals line is available at Adidas Originals concept satellite store at 3/L Shangri-La Plaza Shopping and G/F, Robinson's Place Manila.

HERE'S why: Marrieoud at the SM Mall of Asia has in store for Christmas, among other exclusive beauty and fragrance treats, Day After Detox Kit, which includes Guerlain Lote Night Recovery Skincare Treatment, Valmont Spain of Forty Cleansing Water and Origins Peace of Mind, P1,950.

PURE Bliss Package made up of Molton Brown Sauna Wraps Foot Steaming Velvet, Quinine+Sodium Buffing Mask and Decleor Aroma Spa Tonic, P1,688. Shoppers can get as much as 20-percent discount when they buy these products as a set.

Sugar is sweet and that's the problem

From page D1

ducing more of the protein hormone to keep the blood glucose under control. Eventually, it becomes exhausted and no longer functions properly.

Type 2 diabetes isn't a chronic, progressive and deadly disease. In the past, it usually appeared in adults older than 35 years old. But because of obesity and environmental factors, the disorder is now increasingly seen in children and young adults.

Although blood glucose control is the key to diabetic management, late diagnosis, when blood glucose levels are already out of control, is a major reason for the sharp increase in chronic incidences.

Late diagnosis happens since the symptoms, like frequent urination, excessive thirst or lack of energy, are not obvious or dramatic.

Blurred vision, a classic symptom of Type 2 diabetes, is seen very late in the disease. Only a fraction of diabetics actually achieve blood glucose control.

Dietary changes among Asians contribute to the growing problem. People are increasingly eating less healthful foods, especially with the Westernization of many people's diet that involves a lot of junk food.

Gutierrez stressed the need for a balanced diet and exercise in preventing diabetes. She added that the diabetic diet is actually a healthy choice for everyone.

She said many physicians control blood glucose levels in people with Type 2 diabetes with the "sequential approach" (lifestyle modification and treatment with oral antidiabetic medications). Sometimes a combination of drugs is necessary.

The problem with this approach, she said, was it took too long before the target reduction in a certain type of hemoglobin, HbA1c, of 6.5 percent or below was achieved. Hbal cells in the blood stream are made up of the chemical hemoglobin. Glucose sticks to the hemoglobin, making a glycosylated hemoglobin called hemoglobin A1c or Hba1c. More Hba1c indicates more glucose in the blood.

Gold standard

The Hbalc test is now the gold standard in diabetes management. Red cells live for 6-12 weeks before they are replaced. Measuring the HbA1c gives the blood glucose average in the body for the past 9-12 weeks.

The daily blood glucose test that many diabetics do only gives a "snapshot" of glucose levels for a particular day.

"Unlike daily blood glucose test, such as fasting plasma glucose, you cannot 'cheat' with the HbA1c test," Gutierrez said.

A combination of diet, exercise and therapy could help achieve the HbA1c target, she said. The expert stressed the need for a combination therapy since most drugs treated just one aspect of the disease. She said evidence suggested combination therapy was better at maintaining blood glucose levels.

There are five main classes of drugs for treating Type 2 diabetes: Thiazolidinediones (troglitazone) improve the body's response to insulin action and decrease HbaIc, among others; biguanides (metformin) "drain off" the liver to prevent excess glucose production; sulphonylureas (glimepiride) stimulates more insulin production and lowers HbaIc.

In a recent study by Adopt (A Diabetes Outcome Progression Trial), weight-one reduced risk in Type 2 diabetes by 33 percent compared to metformin, and 63 percent compared to glyburide.

Gutierrez advised patients to ask their doctors for the best treatment. As for the test: "If your blood glucose is on the borderline, please don't wait for it to spiral out of control. Diabetes is a serious medical condition. You wouldn't want it," she said.

E-mail the author at qsantos@inquirer.com.ph

CLIP & SAVE

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Side leg lift

STRENGTHENS AND TONES THE HIP/LAME BUTTOCKS

Equipment:
Exercise mat and ankle weights (optional)

Exercise technique:
1. Use your bottom arm as a pillow and place your top hand in front of you for balance.
2. The bottom leg should be bent for a good base of support.
3. Raise your top leg (as low as your hip. This is your starting and ending position.
4. Raise your top leg as high as you can without turning the toes toward the ceiling. Keep the toes and knee facing forward.
5. Finish the required number of repetitions. Switch sides.

Performance tips:
1. Keep the hip muscle always facing the ceiling. If you roll your leg forward, you'll use your hamstrings and not hurtle. If you roll your leg backward, your quadriceps

(continued on the front of this thigh will take over.
2. Keep your head and spine in a straight line.
3. Don't be concerned to avoid rolling your hip muscle instead of lifting it over your pelvis.
4. Stay in control of your leg. It is just as important to control the downward phase of the movement as the upward phase.
5. If you have chronic hip joint pain, avoid this exercise.

Repetitions:
Do 10-15 repetitions.

WELL AND GOOD
TINA JACOT

Close encounters of the gym kind

IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE I managed a gym but I still remember many incidents that make me chuckle or shake my head in amazement.

For the most part, my clients were average people who wanted to get fit under our supervision. But there were a few who were, shall we say, extraordinary. Some were eccentric, some humiliated, some truly for the books and some just victims of unusual circumstances.

Cell phones

When the first ultra-small cell phones came out on the market, one of our clients flashed her brand new clip-on phone in the locker room. She placed the phone on her lap while doing her thing, almost mindlessly reached behind to flush, stood up and smirked in horror as the phone plopped into the toilet.

We felt bad for her and it wasn't much fun for us either because we had to remove the entire bowl. The phone was totally ruined and the poor client had to face her hubs (mother who had just given it to her for her birthday.

Another client wouldn't text while doing step aerobics. Incredibly foolish but true. Despite repeated admonitions from the teacher, she persisted. Well, one day she fell off her bench.

Luckily, she didn't get hurt. After the initial shock, the teacher quietly snickered and prayed that she had finally learned her lesson. She did.

Super saleswoman

If you ever need a champion salesperson, I know just who to recommend. We had this client who was a born saleswoman.

Though it was forbidden (as will things in the gym, she just couldn't help herself. Selling was in her blood. We would find boxes of detergent tucked away in corners of the locker room. We got complaints from clients after fish wrapped boxing in flyers to her sales pitch while exercising on a treadmill beside her.

She brought a small cooler to class that I assumed had cold water. One day during the facemask session, I saw her casually pull out a frozen lasagna, offering it to a surprised classmate who was dutifully doing her abdominal crunches/cascade her.

Another time, I arrived to find our cardio room had become a garage. She hung clothes on all the cardio machines. The staff gave me a look that said: "We tried to stop her."

The last straw was when a jar of krudoo was broken in five buckets. It took us a week to get the smell out. She was a nice person but she just couldn't get selling out of her system.

Stagalizer

We had a client who liked to work out in solitude and to emphasize silence. Even if there was no one else in the gym, she wanted the instructors to stay far away from her. They couldn't even make eye contact.

If there was a class going on, she would put cotton in her ears and tell the new instructor to turn down the music. One day, a particularly perky instructor volunteered for the regular teacher.

The client approached her and said, "I'm stopping and no happy-happy." The startled instructor asked after the class, "Who was that?" Where told she was the owner of another client who was Miss Congeniality, the instructor asked, "Stagalizer?" The name stuck.

Surprise encounter

Our weighing scale was kept in our naturally-lit women's area so you could weigh yourself in private. The door had no lock. A client had the habit of completely undressing to weigh herself while a staff member stood guard at the door.

Well, one day the "guardian" got distracted and left her post. The cleaning maintenance men were there and I'm sure I'm not the only one to experience so gosh awkward history forty from the room.

I don't know who was more surprised and embarrassed but there were screams from both parties. For weeks, our client and maintenance guy could not make eye contact.

Body odor

You would think people would know if they had BO. The signs are all around—the staff uses up a whole can of air freshener, other customers cough and gasp for breath, and there is an ever-widening circle separating the "guilty" party and the other people. But apparently people with BO cannot smell themselves.

Telling a person they have BO is probably the most socially uncomfortable situation you can imagine. Staff members pass the responsibility back and forth like a radioactive football. Nobody wants to do it.

You know you are going to hurt the client's feelings no matter how tactful you are and you also know you will probably never see him/her again. But you have to do it; otherwise, you would lose your other clients.

My memories of these encounters are not pleasant ones. I have had a case bout former on the dangers of getting cancer from pesticides, have almost physically attacked someone who had an verse all imagining things, and that anything that may was "scary." One woman even broke down, crying that her husband was leaving her for his secretary (the connection is still lost on me).

Showdown

There was a time when meetings at the gym would be quite tense. There was a daily battle of wills between a hefty bodybuilder type who liked rock 'n' roll music and a meditative type who wanted to work out with soft music or no music at all.

Whoever got to the gym first won round one. The first person to use the rest room would lose the next round. If the bodybuilder were first, he would listen to rock. If the yoga type were first, he would listen to silence. If Mr. Yoga were first, The bullying bruiser would blast him.

One day, they had the ultimate showdown, alternately switching the music on and off for about five minutes. After that, they called a truce and decided to come at separate times. Whew!

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Editor Bronnie O. Velarde

Backstage drama at Regal mall show

DURING THE MALL SHOW FOR Regal Films' fantastic four MMFF entries, Ina Cabrera and Alfred Vargas were frosty to each other backstage. Their on-cam mantrol teasing chem, but here BF Jerry Garcia and Alfred's EB Li Reyes, need not be alarmed. They were just probably being shummy since Ina and Alfred are both shutbinding by nature. No kidding, dressers, as it were, attention equivalent to attraction?

• Another behind-the-scene "drama" at the mall show was Encampo de Leon taunting Pandemic Isaac. Maybe he's still hunting after the dirtbird bite. To downplay the screams, Pandemic told her co-stars, "Mic-dine po nga ako sa dilim at Ginger. Ginger ako kasi sa The Ginger Bread Man." That's a bit good fellow for the holidays!

• In her pantsuit sudsy manner, Ethel Booba asked sexy hard to enunciate the title Pink Flies Trusted, shrinking and laughing luminously while watching a movie. The unaliterate got really bluff. What a way to mind the show when she said some part of it!

• Vina Morales had every right to slap Bong Alcantara for his foul statement about her ex Cil Mo's milk-thru. Could it be true that after their confrontation, Vina's BF told Bong: to respect women? Well, cinamic schtic. A naughty knifer also, "If you were passengers on Bong BF at Pino? Isit very respect to dreadth type?" Right words from the wrong mouth!

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

Shake Rattle & Roll 6

REGAL Films' "Shake, Rattle & Roll" unveils demon down cop quite. But it take makes my heart single because the grand scene in toe will more forget the titos my son R. Mendoza bagged a first Child demon for his role in "SRR 4."

He's back in "SRR 6" as a new "scream," R. is in the "ATM" segment with Maxidine Reyes, Kristopher de Leon, Eugene Domingo, Gian Prand, Mike Dalisay, Empress Schuck, Ellen Ingusid, Charles Christianson, Ehra Madrigal, Mhyer Aquino and the latest "crush" Krupe Gerbie.

The highlight is that scene where Shake her and Kristopher are being chased by a monster. They stand out of an office window more than 30 feet down the ground. It required them to jump from the ledge to a generation several feet away. If they missed their marks, they would fall to the ground covered with shards of broken glass. Mhyer and Krupe trained on doing the scene themselves.

The other episodes are "1:10 Rule" featuring Kristine Brewer and Bearwin Meily and "Hair" top-billed by Ian Gabriel and Sheryl Cruz. Abet and greet the cast at the gala premiere, 7 p.m. at SM Megamall. Cinema 10. Date to SHARE your boring BATTLE around the Christmas tree and let the good times ROLL.

New albums

DIDDIDOH is smilin' to the sound of Solaisis, with the launch of its self-titled debut album under SonCon Music Corporation's Diego Paterno, Jr. Marcos, Mike Bernales, Junior Abalos and Paulo Solaisima, the band's music is best described as a combination of rock sound, inspiring lyrics and powerful arrangements. Its songs like "Pedro," "Hindsay" and "Superhero" are all original. Solaisis is MTV Rising Star of the Month. Visit www.soundcon.com.ph/diddydoh.

Star Records has launched Maverick Playlist album, "Modern Kitchen Collection," a collection of revivals and originals that will redefine jukebox hits. It includes Raven's version of "Say Pag-ibig Kung Ito," "I Remember the Sky" and "Sayang na Sayang." Shuvyn is the multiplatinum balladeer doing sassy spunky with the release of "Pasila (Kwentong Jollibee)," also in the album.

Person Science Diamond' smashing album, "To Dali" (MCA Music), comes three seasonal single, "Land of a Thousand Words." They deliver this contemporaneous sound about other three playful first single "I Don't Feel Like Dancing." Three quirkiness makes the album all the more surprising.

Holiday jamming

CD/DVD music definitely brightens holiday cheer but looking for the right kind can be nerve-wracking. Visit Limebucks.com.ph and find the solution to the dilemma. It will help you locate local bands and solo artists who are perfect for your events ... and your budget, of course.

E-mail: entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

CHEER FACTOR

ROBERTO ALAGNA

Robot lover

Roberto Alagna, who once used all the magic at Milton's La Scala of ever he was bound to mid-performance Sunday before last, ranged his own show outside the (tuxed) opera house on Thursday at the shrine were an audio without him.

Alagna, 43, arrived in Piazza della Scala shortly before "Aida" was due to start and began singing before a crowd of onlookers.

He took a photograph of the theatre with his mobile phone: "So take a souvenir ... of La Scala because I don't know when I will see it again."

Reuters

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A GOOD YEAR
CASINO ROYALE
GHOST RIDER
SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
THE RETURN
THE NATIVITY STORY
TENACIOUS D
MARIKINA

TENACIOUS D
HAPPY FEET

GREENHILLS
GREENHILLS
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HAPPY FEET
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THE MARKET!
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SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
MARIKINA
HAPPY FEET
THE RETURN
CASINO ROYALE

THE MARKET!
THE NATIVITY
TENACIOUS D
HAPPY FEET

Generosity is really its own reward

Arah TV winners

A grand total of 37 programs from 10 TV stations were recently bestowed the Arah TV Seal of Family Merit/Boses, an award given by diverse themselves as pulled by the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children and Television.

The child-sensitive programs are—ABS-CBN: "Bayan Ko," "Barangay and Friends," "John En Shirley," "Kahulugayang Hindi sa Iwasak," "Game Ka Na Ba?," "Wasted K," "Salamat Dok," "Sarcile World of Animation," "The New Adventures of Madeline," "Wansapanataxan."

GMA: "Tamaraw," "Kuntu, pilip," "MIN Diaries," "Sportsdate," "Tulo Ka Ta," "The Morning Show," "Bring ng Buena," ABC: "ABC Mobilebuses," "Natural 3," "Bring Manila," "Gourmet Everyday" "Bookfellow" "Time Bomb My Plate," "Island Heaven," "Solutions from Network," "Mommy Academy," "Nutrition and health," "Pinoy Ito Tayo," "Tabatong Bisaya," "The Practical Cook Show," "Blind Made Made."

Topics," "Jordan on the Go," ABS: "Bilog Pinoy to Medicine," "Dear ng Bundo," "Studio 23 "20th Seasonal Quiz Bee," "100 Club dish," "7th Heaven," "Breakfast Superstars," "Entrepinoy," "Math Talk," "Postman Ito," "Grandmarks," "Sports TV" "The Boy of Thrill," "I Speak," NET 25: "Into 25," "Cinemapinoy," "Hamtinoy," "Tahiya ni Kalampay," "Home Cells," "In Touch," "Kapuso in Hanapbuhay," "Open Line," "The Music," "Tomorrow Today," "Tibo."

'Music and Lyrics'

Hugh Grant and Drew Barrymore's co-star in the new romantic comedy "Music and Lyrics." Grant plays a washed-out '80s pop star who is finally offered a comeback by a reigning diva.

The catch is that he has to write a hit in a matter of days, and he's never written lyrics. So, he's forced to collaborate with Barrymore's character, who has a way with words, but is an emotional mess after a breakup.

Can they use shoot-'em-ups performance from and give themselves another chance?

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

'If only my friend Ronnie were here'

By Nini Valera

TWO YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, Fernando Poe Jr. is still being mourned by friends in the movie industry, according to one of his closest buddies, Jestoni Teglo.

Teglo, whose career as a bit player in the movies was launched by FPJ in the '80s, told Entertainment on Thursday, the actor's second death anniversary, that she visits the FPJ Studios in Quezon City almost everyday to "talk" to the actor.

"I go to his office and talk to him, as if he were still alive. Is-sinesing in my problema... joking with him," Teglo said. "I miss him badly."

She said FPJ's death had left small -like vacuum- levels of a hometown who found their social life when they fell sick, and who even buried their dead.

"Losing FPJ is like losing Philhealth benefits," Teglo said. "You never had it and, at last, 84 know what you needed."

She recalled that, two weeks after he died in December 2004, FPJ's genuinely still spilled over to the movie industry workers, who by then had formed the Highdalang Manggagawa ng Pelikulang Pilipino.

"It was Christmastime, and we were preparing gift bags to distribute to the workers among us," Teglo narrated, "when packed goods were delivered to us....Inf- over from the aid that FPJ had shipped to typhoon victims -sadly, after the typhoon."

Teglo, 35, first met FPJ when she was 15. "He cast me as a bit player in one of his movies," she said. "Sa buong shoot friends, and I appeared in all of his movies. I was also a relative, cousin, and confidante to Ronnie."

When FPJ campaigned for the presidency, Teglo was among the organizers of the actor's rallies.

Shortly before FPJ died, Teglo asked him for help in setting up her own small business. He would have went to that, she is sure.

"It's not like he singled me out to help," Teglo said. "He was helpful to everybody. Whenever he saw a poor person on the street, he would walk over and give him money."

Recently, her electric power at home was cut after she failed to settle the bill. She said she had to borrow money from three people to be able to pay up.

"It's only Ronnie were here," she sighed.

ARANETA CENTER

Gateway MALL Farmers Plaza

Greenbelt CINEMAS 10

SPIRIT TRAP	TENACIOUS 'D'	SHAUN of the EVIL DEAD	
THE NATIVITY	DEVDAS A GOOD YEAR	HAPPY FEET	
ALL THE KING'S MEN	CASINO ROYALE	INANG YAYA	ALL THE KING'S MEN

MALL 5

1	SPIRIT TRAP	2	CASINO ROYALE	3	TENACIOUS 'D'
4	SHAUN of the EVIL DEAD	5	KAMASUTRA 3		

ARANETA COLISEUM

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Porkchop video album

Porkchop Duo, the internationally acclaimed comedy tandem, is teaming home for Christmas to promote its latest video album titled "Porkchop Duo/Vol.2."

The video will feature the duo in songs and comic routines that represent Pilipino humor.

The Porkchop Duo's first album piled up a Gold Record award for outstanding sales.

After 27 years, it has released 14 albums and performed live in 23 countries.

Christmas selection

The album "Let There Be Share On Earth: A Sony BMG Music Entertainment All Star Christmas" features past and present Christmas hits from the label's top roster of OPM artists.

Among the songs in the selection are "Even Santa Fell In Love" (Lea Salonga), "Pasking Sagalongos" (Eheads' Ely Buendia), "Sana Ngayong Pasko" (Jolo Revilla), "Gospel In Stereo" (Imbalzado), "Christmas Bell" (Imbalzado) and "Last Year's Christmas (Jimmy Bondoc).

glorietta GREENBELT ATRIUM TOWN Ayala Center Cebu Ayala Malls

AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1	2 HAPPY FEET	3 SPIRIT TRAP	4 REYNA
G4	1 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE	2 TENACIOUS D	3 CASINO ROYALE	
	4 ALL THE KING'S MEN	5 A GOOD YEAR	6 HAPPY FEET	7 THE NATIVITY
GB1	1 TENACIOUS D	2 HAPPY FEET		
GB3	1 A GOOD YEAR	2 HAPPY FEET		
	3 THE NATIVITY	4 TENACIOUS D	5 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE	
ATC	1 HAPPY FEET	2 A GOOD YEAR		
	3 THE NATIVITY	4 SPIRIT TRAP	5 TENACIOUS D	
ACC	1 DECK THE HALLS	2 BEE MOVIE	3 FRAGILE	4 HAPPY FEET
M2	1 HAPPY FEET	2 A GOOD YEAR		
	3 THE NATIVITY	4 SPIRIT TRAP	5 TENACIOUS D	

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	TOWN
Pasikuyog K-9, December 14 to 17, 2006	Jesus Rabbit, December 11 to 22, 2006
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Christmas Carols at One World String Orchestra, December 16, 2006	Christmas Goodies Bazaar, December 11 to 15, 2006

Greenbelt — Holiday Harmonies with the Philippine Madrigal Singers, December 2, 9 & 23, 2006

Christian Dior — Repertoire Philippines presents SOUND OF MUSIC at RCC's Music Theater, November 17, 2006. For inquiries, pls. call 891-0731

Ayala Museum — Watch RIZAL: LIFE ON THE TRACKS, A documentary by acclaimed Filipino director Gino Caralipio, December 15, 2006, 1:00 PM - 7:00 PM

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